

“The Dialectics of Exile: Aspects of Poetic Theory and Practice in Jorge de Sena”

Christopher Damien Aurette
Department of Applied Social Sciences
School of Sciences and Technology
New University of Lisbon
Caparica, PORTUGAL

cda@fct.unl.pt

Abstract:

The volume of poetry entitled *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico* (written in 1972, published in 1977), possesses a paradigmatic Senian complexity—thematic, conceptual, humanist, and poetic—which we explore in this paper. The Hegelian-Marxist theoretical framework, i.e., the dialectical underpinnings of the poet’s approach to modernity’s civilizational project is explored in this meditative series of serenely agonistic, elegiacally erotic poems. In addition, the volume reveals Sena’s poetic mediation of exile transforming a personal sense of cultural isolation into a profound insight into exile as *the* universal human experience, i.e., the alienation of being caused by the betrayal of humanity’s self-transcendent mission, a mission which deeply informs Sena’s understanding of authentic poetic consciousness. *Sobre esta praia* reveals and practices the mediatory role Sena attributes to poetic consciousness as evidenced in his poetry from *Perseguição* (1942) to *Conheço o sal... e outros poemas* (1974). As Sena observes the Californian sunbathers from the escarpment where he positions himself “sobre esta praia,” a complex ideational metamorphosis occurs: the poet’s second American (Californian, 1970-1978) exile (an exile originated by a sense of profound cultural isolation) is transformed by him into a poetically structured understanding of exile as humanity’s existential condition which only a dialectically-informed poetic consciousness is equipped to grasp, disclose, and transcend. Alienated consciousness is consciousness *in* exile; consciousness *of* exile is consciousness of the metamorphic powers of poetry. By way of such metamorphic powers, the poem becomes the poet’s ultimate homeland. Poetry is the supreme territory of being because in fact it *is* home. Thus, moving from a description of erotic stasis (witnessed in the humanity he observes at the edge of the Pacific) to the implicit evocation and practice of dialectical dynamism, from the prison-house of a specific historical and civilizational logic (which subverts a truly emancipatory project for humankind) to the ascendant, transfigurative language of poetic vision (sharing, as Sena does, a poetic lineage with Camões and Petrarch), *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico* represents a major poetic achievement. Our analysis of this volume of poetry seeks to reveal aspects of Sena’s modernity as well as its relevance for our self-understanding today as modern- or postmodern pilgrims en route toward the “loca infecta” of contemporary forms of alienated being.

Key words: Exile, *Bildung*, Dialectics, Poetics, Alienation

“Na peregrinação que é a nossa vida, muito mais somos visitados do que visitamos”. (Jorge de Sena, *Poesia I*)

A Brief Outline of a Theory of Exilic Poetics in the Poetry of Jorge de Sena

Jorge de Sena, the author of multiple acts of “peregrinatio” throughout his life and work, deeply understood the insufficiency of established critical and literary traditions. Such insufficiency drives Sena’s vast critical and creative project of cultural renewal and transformation, i.e., the mobilization of language for the purpose of reflecting upon, and acting toward, the reshaping of a collective civilizational logic. Empirical observation, sociological intuition, theoretical speculation, and complex symbolic mediation: Sena employs these rich areas of reflection and artistic creation in order to transform the stagnant and distorting conceptualizations concerning language (logos), the socio-political sources of historical reality (polis), and poetic consciousness (poiesis). Sena’s critical and creative project is one of imaginative totality: it seeks nothing less than to imagine fresh territories of human potential. His work addresses issues of mythopoetic memory, institutional practices, and complex historical processes, all of which orientate Sena’s work as artist, thinker, translator, and teacher. Thus, his vast bibliography demonstrates a steady commitment to understanding and transforming the practical and theoretical axes informing our historical self-understanding. Sena’s work is one of amorous destruction: cultural memory, self-understanding, and collective fate are the object of a profound reappraisal and, often, conceptual demolition. His is one of the ongoing labors of modernity: to question and subsequently subvert the largely a-critical contents of tradition inasmuch as the problematical fate of such a-critical thinking inevitably menaces human dignity and freedom. We know that even a seemingly innocuous term such as humanism revealed itself to bear a highly problematical fate throughout the twentieth-century. In its a-critical (and therefore false) purity, there existed an undetected inhumanity either embedded within, or spuriously added to, or perhaps even inseparable from, the meanings historically attributed to this term. The contemporary philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, for example, during his seminal 1999 lecture, *Reglen Für Den Menschenpark* [Portuguese translation: *Regras para o Parque Humano, Uma resposta à «Carta sobre o humanismo»*], explores the challenges posed by the term humanism for philosophical reflection, the essential task for philosophy being the serenely painstaking disclosure of difference operating within apparently settled meanings. If there is to be a conceptual restructuring of the so-called *given*, or a proposal of conceptual disquiet within the intelligentsia’s *same old, same old*, then Sloterdijk certainly unsettles in his lecture the semantically static, or ideologically anchored, or culturally dogmatic, i.e., the insufficiently questioned contents of cultural tradition. Philosophical reflection aims to restore innovatory perspectives in the face of habitual ideations of the real. This is also Sena’s essential task.

Jorge de Sena explores throughout his immense critical and creative output, an extremely rich territory of reflection. Like Sloterdijk, Sena performs a similar task of cultural innovation and conceptual remapping, specifically with respect to long-held perspectives concerning the Portuguese literary tradition as well as the nature and

practice of poetic creation itself. For the Portuguese poet, the poetic task is nothing more, nothing less than the rescuing of the dialectical magnitude of the real. This task requires a theoretical framework and a practical concretion of which his poetry is the supreme instantiation. Dialectical? Task? Reflection? Yes. As readers of the vast intellectual and poetic universe of reflection given us by Sena, we are in the presence of a creative intelligence endowed with a fiercely honed awareness that the poet must effect an ongoing encounter with the real and that only by way of the dialectically driven, historically grounded mediatory role of poetry can the real become a culturally vital, constructed presence. Sena's poetic witnessing to modernity's (and humanism's) problematic or betrayed emancipatory project for humankind, which has in fact produced a deathly pseudo-history of immediacy (i.e., without the transformative experience of poetic consciousness), means that we are not presently rescued from the inhuman or the unfree. Only by understanding the distorted perceptions concerning the actual human situation on all fronts (an understanding which poetic creation both reflects and drives) can there arise a truly post-alienated human history. Thus, Sena's deeply conceptual poetic thinking exemplifies the theory and practice of both a foundational and eschatological imaginative arc. His is the creative edifice of high modernity.

And yet, given the essential circumstantiality of human beings, Sena's poetry reflects, alongside this conceptual complexity, an awareness of the autobiographical elements of a poet's life as being equally essential to the building of a creative edifice. As a poet who experienced exile and cultural isolation as well as embodied the existential amplitude of a cosmopolitan mind and imagination, Sena's exilic path, first in Brazil, then in the United States (holding full professorships first in Wisconsin, then in California), can also be seen as the paradigmatic experience of the modern pilgrim who creates his or her identity from the discrete moments of a life lived on the move, both inwardly and outwardly. With respect to the meaning of pilgrimage in modernity, the work of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman elucidates aspects of Sena's own personal pilgrimage across the continents:

Como peregrinos, podemos fazer um pouco mais do que apenas andar – podemos *andar para*. Podemos igualmente olhar os traços que deixámos para trás de nós na areia e chamar-lhes estrada. Podemos *meditar* sobre a estrada passada e falar dela como de um *progresso rumo a*, um avanço, *uma aproximação de*; podemos introduzir uma distinção entre «para trás» e «para a frente», e conceber a estrada que avança como uma sucessão de passos que deverão ainda marcar a terra não marcada. O destino, o fim declarado da peregrinação da vida, dá uma forma ao que a não tem, torna o fragmentário totalidade, confere continuidade ao episódico. (Bauman 94)

Sena, pilgrim and citizen of the world, effects in his poetry, then, the dialectical transcendence (often translated in this context as sublation, i.e., the Hegelian *Aufhebung*) of exile in search of that “totalidade.” If Sena asserts in his essay “Marx e o Capital”:

Repudiando a transcendência, o marxismo é, por força do seu pensamento dialético, o transcendentalismo elevado a mais alta dignidade, porque é uma filosofia da superação do homem por si mesmo, graças a uma metodologia que não depende dos exemplos obsoletos com que se manifeste, uma vez que se identifica à própria estrutura da nossa representação intelectual do universo, ou à forma como o universo se transformará à medida do homem (136-137),

it is because

In Marx's account history remains open in accordance with the specific ontological necessity of which self-mediating human teleology is an integral part: for there can be no way of predetermining the forms and modalities of human 'self-mediation' (whose complex teleological conditions can only be satisfied in the course of the self-mediation itself) except by arbitrarily reducing the complexity of human actions to the crude simplicity of mechanical determinations. (Mészáros)

If exile is a given in Sena's life, then poetically and conceptually understood, exile must be and can be overcome. This is *his* essential task as a finite being and historically situated consciousness. The stakes are high: in the face of exile or cultural isolation, memory is both continuously preserved and menaced, dispersed and rewritten, which means, too, that memory can be released from the limiting ontology of exile in favor of a fuller dialectics of being. Our reading of his volume *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico* seeks to reveal to what extent Sena succeeds in transforming his diasporic fate into a conceptual and poetic act of homecoming. His condition as pilgrim thus precedes a deeper self-encounter and reflective depth. Moreover, his exilic state becomes a profoundly creative insight into exile as a universal experiential category; the experience of diaspora leads to his discovery of the authentic territory of being as one committed to a path toward non-alienated, i.e., fully mediated consciousness.

Such a transformation of the experience of exile into a universal category of existence is the result, not only of an ongoing encounter with the real, but also the ironical remapping of space, time, selfhood, and otherness. Antoine Berman writes in respect of the German Idealist notion of *Bildung* (the cultural, humanizing education of the individual) that:

la *Bildung* est un auto-processus où il s'agit d'un « même » qui se déploie jusqu'à acquérir sa pleine dimension. (...) Car l'expérience est la seule notion pouvant embrasser toutes les autres. Elle est élargissement et infinitisation, passage du particulier à l'universel, épreuve de la scission, du fini, du conditionné. Elle est voyage, *Reise*, ou migration, *Wanderung*. Son essence est de jeter le « même » dans une dimensions qui va le transformer. Elle est le mouvement du « même » qui, changeant, se retrouve « autre ». (74)

Thus, we may conclude that the « même » of selfhood and the « autre » of otherness, encountered during Sena's personal experience of diaspora, signify that this encounter participates in an innovatory rewriting of memory: the contact with otherness can be in fact emancipatory. From self to otherness, Sena is both the theorist and the practitioner of a poetic eschatology. His *Bildung* becomes the source of his critical and creative project as the reshaper of a civilizational logic, hitherto alienating and distorting of humanity's essential ontology, in favor of a new emancipatory logic and Eros. Sena, the modern pilgrim, knows that even the notion of home must be a constructed presence of revolutionary *becoming* located beyond the present-day instrumentalization of the human. For now, given humanity's ongoing alienated situation, it is the poem itself which must preserve and actuate the redemptive homeland to be. Thus, Sena's poetics takes us from an experience of *Bildung* in personal exile to an experience of exile as universal *Bildung*. Sena accomplishes these multiple tasks in his creative and critical output with unceasing dialectical vigilance.

A truly earthly finality for humankind must first be desired to become real. Senian poetics is one of vehement desire and ongoing self-transcendence in service to this finality. The Hegelian premise, transmitted to us by his famous follower Alexandre Kojève's clarifying critical commentary, readily applies to Sena's theoretical and practical identity: "a história humana é a história dos Desejos desejados" (Kojève 9).

I. From Theory to Practice: On the Beach with Jorge de Sena, Luís de Camões, and Herbert Marcuseⁱ: *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*ⁱⁱ

Given the complexity of Sena's volume of poetry, entitled *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*, written September-December 1972 and published five years later in 1977—the last volume to be published during his lifetime—we have elected to organize three distinct approaches to the poetic series below. We first provide a synoptic presentation of each of the eight meditations, their respective thematic axes, aspects of their internal conceptual framework, an exploration of the densely cognitive progression from Meditation I to Meditation VIII, the (tide-like) recurrence of imagery throughout the eight meditations (the description of topographical characteristics, observation of weather conditions, the changing degree of luminosity and temperature, the variable disposition of sunbathers on the beach, etc.), and the poetic gnosis which Sena develops throughout this serenely agonistic, elegiacally erotic volume. Secondly, we present the ideational content of the volume in terms of oppositional conceptual pairs, thus permitting the reader to explore the deeply agonistic structure of the volume (and ultimately unresolved, except within the poetic consciousness at work here). This binary structure, emphasizing the antithetical territories of Pacific coastline as *humanly* expressed by the sunbathers observed by the poet on the one hand and, on the other, the poet's distinct, internal territory informed by mythopoetic memory, erotic nostalgia, and cultural isolation, configures a *purposively* incomplete dialectical process in which a final reconciliation of contradictory ideational contents, i.e., the sublation (the Hegelian *Aufhebung*) of opposites into a greater synthesis, which would absorb and resolve the positive *and* negative moments of reason (i.e., the now-mediated, now-alienated

contents of consciousness) into a higher unity, is ultimately deferred. Moreover, the autumnal mood of this volume arises from the poet's apprehension of a world where such synthesis or dialectical transcendence is utterly absent or presently impossible given the civilizational logic at work on this Pacific coast. Lastly, the third approach to Sena's poetic meditation is a comparative reading of *Sobre esta praia* and Camões' *Canção*, "Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte." Sena, who published extensively on the work of Camões, both as scholarⁱⁱⁱ and as poet^{iv}, in addition to both poets' possessing a similar Mozart^v-like sensibility with respect to the human condition—the "multímada face do real"^{vi}—shares with the author of *Os Lusíadas* a profound knowledge of the expressive capabilities of the Portuguese language, an encyclopedic humanist culture, autobiographical similarities (Camões' almost seventeen-year exile in Asia; Sena's almost nineteen-year America exile [Brazil and the United States]), as well as a shared commitment to poetic creation as the highest expression of human consciousness^{vii}. Both poets, thus read in comparative fashion in this last of three approaches, convey a commensurate sense of ethical urgency and speculative visionariness, while simultaneously projecting their self-awareness as poets of the poet's contribution to the fateful extension of human consciousness, seated, as it is, within our essentially earthbound creatureliness (e.g., Camões' "bicho da terra vil e tão pequeno" of the *Canção* explored here^{viii}; Sena's "Hierarquia/de uma pedra branca e fria, sem limites/por dentro dos limites. Esperança/vazia e vertical. Humanidade" in "Nave de Alcobaça"^{ix}). Furthermore, both poets share a sense of eschatological self-transcendence at work within historical humanity, which poetry essentially enacts. Consequently Camões' and Sena's poetic practice reveal the deeply agonistic, existential (and therefore temporal) cadence of poetic cognition which determines and simultaneously seeks to surpass the ideational boundaries of the poetic text itself (e.g., Camões' "mas os meus pensamentos, que são meios/para enganar a própria natureza"^x; Sena's "não é possível dialecticamente que a criação poética se autentique, quando a linguagem não atinge a gravidez suficiente para nela caber o fruto da progressão dialéctica"^{xi}). Both poets arrive, then, at the act of writing (i.e., the *event* of poetic creation) with the knowledge, dialectically acquired, that a poem's conceptual horizon and expressive concretion converge in an ever renewed perception of the fundamental equivocal immediacy explored by poetry. Because poetry is not the repository of an eternal or immutable truth, nor does it release consciousness from the task of witnessing historical reality or from accepting the experiential contingencies of human time^{xii}, this equivocalness requires the ongoing mediatory force of poetic consciousness, which the poetic event reflects and actuates:

Por força das contradições que o determinam, o homem, na sua vida e na sua situação histórica, não extrai da realidade nem realiza o quanto estaria ao seu alcance realizar. (...) Em face das suas próprias virtualidades, o homem é forçado a uma escolha, a uma limitação, a um sacrifício que lhe é imposto ou ele impõe a si mesmo. O homem, portanto, aliena constantemente inúmeras das conclusões últimas que, num dado momento, a vida e a história lhe dão a adivinhar. A dolorosa e consecutiva luta da humanidade para transformar-se

precisamente em humanidade é a própria luta do homem contra a alienação que o mundo exige de quem parte à sua conquista. (Sena, *Poesia e Cultura*: 81)

We see that each poetic event introduces new territory of the yet-to-be-mediated circumstantiality of being, the yet-to-be released (i.e., the no longer alienated and therefore poetically mediated immediacy of the) here-and-now. Only then can the earth-borne pilgrim fulfill humanity's specific "peregrinatio"^{xiii} on earth. Were this poetics of dialectically transformed equivocality neglected by the reader, the significance of the vehemently mediatory force of Sena's poetics and, specifically, of *Sobre esta praia*, would be lost.

By way of these three approaches, it is hoped that the theoretical elements briefly discussed in the first part of this essay will acquire a practical, i.e., non-abstract dimension consonant with aspects of Sena's complex poetics and the civilizational values at stake.

I.a. A Synoptic View of the Eight Meditations Comprising the Poetic Series *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*

Meditation I: The poet initiates his eight-part meditation at the edge of the Pacific with reference to autobiographical reminiscences, thereby establishing an agonistic relation between *then* and *now*, *there* and *here*, *Atlantic* and *Pacific*, *same* and *not-same*, *familiarity* and *otherness*, *identity* and *difference*. The poet recognizes his diasporic or exilic condition, further accentuated by his realization of the mechanically de-eroticized, or erotically truncated humanscape before him. Not even the gods seem to have survived here, or perhaps they've abandoned this coastal world. In any event, they have long since disappeared (as gods, like us, also do, since they are the source of that "luz mortal" which human beings embody, and therefore humanize, and sometimes extinguish). As a consequence of the Pacific coast sunbathers' refusal, or ignorance, of erotically-charged self-transcendence, the absence of such gods presages the repressive instrumentalization of desire into mere sexual performance^{xiv} (i.e., "como máquinas," i.e., without actual erotic force): "Se aqui nasceram deuses, nada resta deles/senão a luz mortal de corpos como máquinas/de um sexo que se odeia no prazer que tenha/e mais é de ódio ao ser-se desejado"). Nonetheless, the poet discloses, by way of this image of loss, the shared dialectical lineage linking mortal and immortal, human and god, immanence and transcendence, a link which will prove to be essential to the internal logic and final visionary outcome of these eight meditations. There is a growing sense of isolation experienced by the poet, a sense of incommensurable difference with respect to the humanity he observes. There is already in this first meditation the intimations of the spectral or deathly nature of the world observed at the edge of the Pacific. The poet's cultural and visionary exile is already apparent: he has become witness to a mythically and erotically posthumous world.

Meditation II: The poet expresses his curiosity about three sunbathers, two young men and one young woman, who lie together on the beach, suggesting (perhaps) a sexual

complicity (which the poet ponders) or, alternatively, simply three youths positioning themselves in a sexless permutation of limbs and dormant genitalia. The poet is both speculatively voyeuristic and almost mournfully self-aware of his exilic condition vis-à-vis the uncertain erotic identities of the observed sunbathers and their naked indolence. The sunbathers' erotic ambiguity or even frigidness (under the intense heat of the Pacific escarpment from which the poet observes them) intensifies a sense of discontinuity between his own past and this present moment lived at the edge of the Pacific ocean: "Quem se pergunta como eu me pergunto/confessa claramente que distância/existe entre o passado e este presente." Moreover, the topography of the Pacific coast resembles similar beaches from the poet's past, where the natural elements converged at the water's edge to witness the ecstatic fusion of erotic play. The meditation comes to an end when the poet once again recognizes the discontinuity between his past and this present, similar alone in terms of the now-visual, now-visionary magnitude of sun and sea. The sunbathers' erotic stasis ends in a melancholic awareness of their unrealized humanity and the poet's profound sense of isolation.

Meditation III: The poet reaffirms the absence of mythic continuity on this Pacific coast, where Eros seems to have been dispersed, dismembered, and suppressed. The poet's mythic imagination—an essential element of the cultural framework for these meditations—contrasts with the (manifestly truncated) present time. The poet's mythic memory, which preserves an image of lost totality informing this second meditation, counters the spectral human scene before him. The time of the gods can be recalled, not by direct observation on this beach, but rather by way of a simile, further accentuating the cultural discontinuity existing between this "praia" and the mythopoetic and erotic memory informing the poet's gaze: "algas secas/são como escuras crespas cabeleiras nuas/de sexos e cabeças de gigantes que,/sumidos no sem tempo, mais não deixam deles que essa memória solta por gasta em águas/o corpo que o seu foi por sobre a praia em rochas." The poet discloses this Californian post-mythic world, where "(...) inda se demora/dispersamente humano ou imagem sobre-humana,/o que fisicamente não tem voz nem gestos." The poet compares this erotically disembodied world with the shards of a mirror which, tellingly, cannot reflect the sunlight which illuminates the beach: "é como se do mundo espelhos se partissem/que nem sequer em estilhas neste sol dardejam." Thus, in this erotically sterile, post-mythic world which, despite the endless luminosity, permanently portends oncoming winter, the sunbathers move in a death-like dance or lie trance-like on the beach, bearers of an unacknowledged (misrecognized) internal disunity (of fragmented being). The fragmentation of an existential wholeness (recalling Sena's Marxist-Hegelian-related "idealidade"), which the reference to the beach once inhabited by (mythic) giants conveys, further suggests the paradox of the sunbathers' public nakedness. In a world without authentic erotic (and therefore life-augmenting) mediation of the real, their nudity conceals more than it reveals. A mythic and erotic unity seems to have been irrevocably lost or relinquished. Winter is not only a season at this edge of the Pacific: "a que luz de inverno/dá não sombrias cores, ou nestas praias/em que uma brisa fria não levanta areais/paira ou perpassa a calma e tamisada/serena paz das tardes infinitas." Winter is in fact also a state of being where

both divine and human fullness is equally sundered. This Pacific coast observed by the poet represents a liminal territory, configuring a complex semantic archipelago of land and sea, past and present, sameness and difference, memory and loss, Eros and Thanatos, totality and fragment, self and otherness. Mythopoetic and erotic memory survive here only as cultural epilogue (the post-mythic world of the sunbathers) or civilizational wasteland. It is the poet, endowed with mythic and erotic memory, who prevails over, and ultimately preserves, the lost totality of consciousness, where not even Narcissus would find his amorous image in the watery mirror of the sea: “para afogar-se mesmo em olhos que o fitassem.”

The reference to Narcissus is germane both to Sena’s meditative series and to Marcuse’s philosophical critique, specifically in his *Eros and Civilization, An Inquiry into Freud*, a work in which Marcuse examines Freud’s conceptual framework in light of modern capitalistic and technological civilization. The colleague of Adorno and Horkheimer explores the “primary narcissism” linked by Freud to the idea of, as Marcuse puts it, “an undifferentiated, unified libido prior to the division into ego and external objects.” Furthermore, “[p]rimary narcissism is more than autoeroticism; it engulfs the ‘environment,’ integrating the narcissistic ego with the objective world.” Consequently,

The concept of primary narcissism implies what is made explicit in the opening chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*—that narcissism survives not only as a neurotic symptom but also as a constitutive element in the construction of the reality, coexisting with the mature reality ego. Freud describes the ‘ideational content’ of the surviving primary ego-feeling as ‘limitless extension and oneness with the universe’ (oceanic feeling). The striking paradox that narcissism, usually understood as egotistical withdrawal from reality, here is connected with oneness with the universe, reveals the new depth of the conception: beyond all immature autoeroticism, narcissism denotes a fundamental relatedness to reality which may generate a comprehensive existential order. In other words, narcissism may contain the germ of a different reality principle: the libidinal cathexis of the ego (one’s own body) may become the source and reservoir for a new libidinal cathexis of the objective world—transforming this world into a new mode of being. (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*: 153,154)

Based on Marcuse’s reading of lines of inquiry within Freudian psychoanalytical theorization, the image employed by Sena in this meditation is particularly suggestive. In keeping with Marcuse’s conceptualization, narcissistic feelings, far from being enclosed in autoerotic fantasy or the “portas cerradas” (Meditation VIII) of isolated bodies, are in fact both expansive and humanizing. Narcissus symbolizes the transformative potentiality of the psyche even after the establishment of the “reality ego.” Sena invokes Narcissus as the messenger of an “oceanic feeling” (in ironic contrast with the erotic drought the poet witnesses at the edge of the Pacific), i.e., a deep connectedness with the totality of existence. Such connectedness contrasts with the erotically atomized bodies of the sunbathers: “de corpos isolados que deambulam.”

(See also, for example: “solidão sem nome”: Meditation IV; “solitários”: Meditation VI; and “na solidão do mundo, a solidão buscada”: Meditation VII)

Meditation IV: The poet registers the weather conditions portending the approach of winter: “Visão estival./Mas hoje só memória”; seasonal changes: “Escuroscuro cendriplúmbeo e vento/em de rajadas pálido céu-tempo,” and pertinent topographical details: “ao longo desta margem serranias/do mar lambidas em pequenas praias/onde pousaram de entre rochas forma em por de areia o espaço procurado”). On this Californian beach there reigns a sense of endemic isolation (not erotic union or ecstasy), where the sunbathers’ bodies, though naked, remain shame-enshrouded: “de humanidade que se não despindo/é como olhar que os veste das suas roupas/com que de humana a carne se envergonha/o quanto desejou não ser vergonha ali.” The poet recognizes a compulsory innocence at work in the sunbathers, i.e., the alienation caused by truncated Eros and the disunity of being leading to the “mesma solidão de humano corpo inteiro/em vértice cruzando o céu, a terra, o mar/numa diagonal de enviesados olhos/que a todos os perfure na inocência/com que se entregam de distância e luz,/virgens de nada menos de ali estarem.” The resultant state of dehumanization is further suggested by the reference to animals other than the mythic centaurs, hybrid creatures, to be sure, but whose human and divine lineage is nevertheless preserved in their semi-anthropomorphic form. The verses, “a nua gente insectos,” e “Num outro tempo hão-de voltar ou não,/se como enxames ou marinhas aves” convey images suggesting the utter loss of selfhood devolving down to the ethological otherness of swarms and herds.

Meditation V: The poet recognizes the onset of winter—summer’s end; yet the weather here is as ambiguous (poised, as it is, between the vernal and the hibernal) as the bodies of the sunbathers who only (mis)recognize their desire, their sexual identity, their transcendent erotic animality (a synonym for humanity’s immanent divinity). As laborers in the cities, a repressive societal logic engulfs them to assign to them the purely fungible^{xv} roles of all alienated workers (see Meditation VII below). The light continues to blaze despite the colder sea air. There are still sunbathers who linger on the beach (“sempre outros que não voltam repetidos”) in an endless cycle of visiting sunbathers who indifferently exhibit the same erotic emptiness: their “corpos invisíveis.” Nonetheless, the poet celebrates even this more hibernal (erotically sterile) environment: “ainda me contentarei,/neste país aonde a vida esconde/de todos e si mesmo até um gesto vago.” Exile “neste país” will be transformed by the poet’s imaginative reappropriation of the vision of Eros at the end of this meditation: “em pensamento ao menos (de quem olha/ou de quem por olhado se aumentara/daquela carne que saliente ou funda/se aponta a quanto se abra, ou se abre ao que se aponta).” The melancholic reference to erotic fusion imagined between now-receiving, now-penetrating bodies occurs here. The erotic imagination has come to the poet’s rescue, after his earlier witnessing of the desolation of a “solidão sem nome” stated in Meditation IV.

Meditation VI: The poet establishes a partial analogy between the Pacific shore and the ancient gods inhabiting similar though distant shores. The present-day inhabitants of the complex geographical area known as the Camargue, located in the French « department » of Bouches-du-Rhône (situated between the Mediterranean and the Rhône Delta), whose inhabitants are known to breed the eponymous horse of that region where sea and land form a vast delta, come to the poet's mind. Significantly, instead of a mythic reference appearing at the end of this meditation (as occurs in Meditation II: "Narciso" and in Meditation I, albeit in order to indicate their absence: "Se aqui nasceram deuses..."), in Meditation VI the reference to the hybrid creatures (half-man / half-horse) occurs at the beginning of the meditation, indicating the structural and semantic centrality of the image of these liminal creatures with respect to the ultimate meaning of this meditation. The centaurs are beings that combine both human and equine attributes: they are more exactly liminal beings in the sense of inhabiting the boundary between animality and humanity, sea and sky (i.e., creatures polysemically poised between the terrestrial and the infinite): "... divinos corpos/cujo cabelo voava como crinas, caudas/dos animais flutuando entre o limite de águas/e o céu que de centauros se recorda". What they are decidedly *not*, is sexually ambiguous (unlike their kindred human sunbathers at the edge of the Pacific). They are, as animals, sexually untamed ("num sacudir de crinas, a cabeça/de olhos arregalados, boca espumejante") and, as evocations of the human, they are also capable of experiencing the transformative powers of Eros: "e o corpo tombe horizontal no abraço/em que de humanas línguas e entrelaços/se façam deuses de que os homens sejam." Intercalated with this erotically charged evocation of now-centaur, now-human coitus, Meditation VI further develops the sense of an erotic wasteland the poet witnesses at the edge of the Pacific. The poet sees and hears the motorized vehicles with which two human visitors to the beach race through space at the water's edge: "estes deslizam dois, silêncio não/mas pares de rodas de estrondeantes máquinas/ao próprio mar calando o som tranquilo." The fusion of human flesh and motorized metal momentarily justifies the poet's analogy with the centaurs (the latter's fusion of hominid and equine, or myth and anatomy, or, what amounts to the same, matter and mythopoetic imagination). However, the analogy is quickly seen to be flawed: beyond the "impulso de existir-se em corpo e sexo/absorto no de voar pelos espaços/que de cortados ares se rasgam brisa," there is no other enduring or real similarity initially drawn by the poet. In fact, the sunbathers remind the poet, owing to the fundamental stasis underlying the former's world, that they are "centauros (sim e não)". The fusion of metal and human flesh cannot reproduce the fundamental experience of erotic union now displaced onto the raucous, vibrating machines. Furthermore, this displacement belies the illusory ecstasy provided by the machine-generated speed, noise and sensuous excitation of the riders: "nessa unidade/entre nádegas nuas e mãos duras/e o mecanismo a que transmitem quanto/não de vidas recebem de animais unidos/em pele contra pele, suor contra suor." The riders' ecstatic traversal of space at the rim of the Pacific ocean (which, it turns out, represents only "uma posse/que só abstracta se cumpriu na força/de duas rodas cintilando acasos") is in fact an image of Eros displaced, exiled, and repressed. After all, flesh alone is the site of transformation "e não metal da máquina ruidosa." Although the vibrating metal

of the machines has produced in the riders' bodies "um tremor," this vibration is of a mechanical, transitory, and external nature, therefore useless to their now solitary bodies lying on the beach in a state of renewed erotic inertia. The riders' fate, as that of all the sunbathers the poet observes, seems to be one of administered^{xvi} desire, whether they are found standing, supine or imitating—on their machines—the flight of unfettered and fully realized animality (for Sena, one of the synonyms for the divine in humans): "cintilando acasos,/fortunas não cumpridas e em si mesmas/fechadas, prisioneiras, no volver velozes/por patas que não houve que ao destino cravem/na terra como em carne a suspensão do tempo."

How can exclusively abstract (therefore deathly) Eros be overcome or sublated? Does Meditation VI provide us with an answer? Yes. The answer lies in a reprise of the mytheme of the hybrid creatures, warriors, we recall, who have been depicted as protagonists of their own mythic battle, the *Centauiromachy*, in which Centaurs and Lapiths wage battle on each other in order to lay claim to the Lapith women, in consequence of which a civilizational order will be established, agonically poised between the merely appetitive and the more pedagogically cultural. (Centaurs, we further recall, are depicted both as untamed sexual beings and as teachers in the extant literature and iconography.)

At the end of Meditation VI, Sena evokes once again the sexual nature of the Centaurs. However, their sexuality is not presented in this passage of the text as unbridled or violent. Instead, Sena creates an image of post-orgasmic satiety and quiescent intimacy, i.e., an evocation of the erotic fullness of being: "pastando com seus dentes e seus lábios/as ervas cujos dedos se levantam/mas nada tocam do que os não conhece." Nature, flesh, desire and consciousness momentarily achieve cathartic synthesis at this moment of the meditation, i.e., the dialectical *becoming* of the poem and the utterly free *being* of the centaurs converge here to convey the fleeting instantiation of experiential plenitude witnessed and actuated by poetic consciousness. This image provides the verbal counter-score to the earlier cacophonous sounds of the motorized vehicles which so effectively overwhelmed the Pacific ocean's "som tranquilo."

The mytheme of the centaurs and their hybrid fate as both human and equine, the reference to the geographic complexity of the Camargue (recalling the Mediterranean world and its millennial mythopoetic and civilizational history), the Camargue's complex cultural and geographical relationship between land, sea, the river delta, and surrounding territory, its literary and linguistic history, as well as the eponymous horse bred there—exemplifying the cultural significance of the man-horse relationship—together provide a pivotal reference which signals both the continuity and the discontinuity existing between the man-horse, or man-god essence of the centaurs on the one hand, and, on the other, the man-machine pairing of the Pacific coast sunbathers who noisily ride at the ocean's edge (thereby disturbing the transfigurative potential of Eros within the erotically-charged nature of "o céu, a terra, o mar" previously referred to in Meditation IV).

The oppositional pair of flesh/metal in this meditation authorizes us to recall Marcuse's critique of present-day technological rationality of the "productive apparatus":

The limits of this rationality, and its sinister force, appear in the progressive enslavement of man by a productive apparatus which perpetuates the struggle for existence and extends it to a total international struggle which ruins the lives of those who build and use this apparatus.

We live and die rationally and productively. We know that destruction is the price of progress as death is the price of life, that renunciation and toil are the prerequisites for gratification and joy, that business must go on, and that the alternatives are Utopian. This ideology belongs to the established societal apparatus; it is a requisite for its continuous functioning and part of its rationality. (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*: 148, 149)

Thus, we may conclude that, even in the midst of the two sunbathers' motorized excursion across the sands of the Pacific coast, their playfulness is more a reflection of the Marcusean (enslaving) performance principle which unrelentingly governs their behaviors than a free manifestation of joy. In accordance with the logic of the specific rational paradigm at work in our technological modernity, reason itself (and therefore the momentary, illusory release from reason under the spell of joy) reproduces, even in play, the ideology of domination.

Meditation VII: The poet rejects both the ambiguity of the season and that of the sunbathers. There *seems* to be no reconciliation here between the poet and the sunbathers, between poetic selfhood and the sunbathers' cultural otherness. The nature of the poet's exilic condition and experience of cultural isolation have nonetheless been altered: it is now the sunbathers who—in their un-lived potential—portray a more radical condition of exile, unaided by the conceptual and experiential amplitude of poetic being. There *seems* to be no shared spiritual citizenry possible here or commensurate process of *Bildung* linking the poet and the sunbathers who, seemingly unawares, labor daily to perpetuate a world which in turn subjugates them, a world which transforms the metamorphic powers inherent in Eros and myth into the false nature of mere routine: "[m]as aqui não. Aqui apenas é/na solidão do mundo a solidão buscada/para ter corpo inteiro sem que o saiba alguém,/nem mesmo ele saiba se é mulher, se é homem,/senão quando vestido for como lhe ordenam/que nas cidades vá como hábito de ser-se." This "hábito de ser-se" reflects the final reification of the sunbathers' being: the confinement of memory and desire within a truncated humanity, the false consciousness of self, and the radical betrayal of Eros.

The discrete anaphoric force of the negation "não" throughout this meditation (which will be further echoed by the final word of the poetic series at the end of Meditation VIII): "[n]ão sonharei," "onde o mar não chega," não há metamorphoses neste mundo," "Mas aqui não," etc., confirm the poet's refusal, i.e., his recognition of irreducible difference between the sunbathers and himself on the level of Logos and Eros, contrasting a quotidian reality in service to a logic of alienating subjugation with the

poetic mediation of the here-and-now into a transfigured and ultimately more real civilizational ideality. The human and natural worlds explored by the poet at the edge of the Pacific is poetically apprehended, but it is not commensurate with the poet's identity, for this beach represents the « degré zero » of Eros, i.e., the opposite of erotic and imaginative fullness or maturity. Sena is thus the bearer of a poetic gnosis which is the speculative negative of the Pacific coast he observes. His speculative voyeurism can now be more fully seen as the embodiment of the dialectical process which he attributes to poetic cognition. Consequently, the poetic series comprises the poetic and speculative *antithesis* of the daily repeated and perpetuated *thesis* of the repressive world of the sunbathers. Their nakedness is not only *viewed* by the poet, it is poetically *unveiled*. Therefore, if the sunbathers symbolize an alienated humanity for the poet: “nada seria no deserto a imagem/da livre humanidade que é só carne/e encontro eventual de dois desejos/com que se esgrimem sexos ou penetrem/o que estrangule e precipite o fim”, then meditation VII affirms the poet's refusal to identify with this world—its unspoken or unrecognized laws, its deathlike civilizational logic, its specific historical project because “[n]ão há metamorfose aqui.” The self-misrecognition by the cities' inhabitants is unyielding. Their ambiguity recurs, we see, throughout the meditative series. Their self-ignorance has not been, nor will it be, transcended. The city inhabitants who come to the edge of the Pacific—both like and unlike the poet himself—ironically drown (unlike Narcissus in Meditation III, who drowns “em olhos que o fitassem”), not in the Pacific ocean, but rather at the ocean's edge inasmuch as the hapless sunbathers understand themselves solely in terms of the routines of being which they neither question nor can consequently transcend. They cannot see through the order of pseudo-nakedness (i.e., ideological blindness) which a repressive societal order (experienced by them as shame) permits them. It is the poet alone whose meditations comprise an act of self-understanding, historical critique, as well as remembered (and now renewed) temporal, mythic and erotic fullness utterly absent from the sunbathers' static world of spectral nudity and deathly sexuality. It is the poet alone who is the keeper of the metamorphic essence of consciousness and perception throughout the poetic series, a circumstance which nonetheless still exacerbates both his isolation and the discreet sense of poetic urgency inherent in these meditations.

With fresh understanding of the natural and human terrain at the edge of the Pacific, the poet continues to observe, speculate upon, and define this Pacific land-, sea- and humanscape as the site of Eros' exile. Yet the poet moves from geographical and cultural exile to a reaffirmation of a millennial-long, poetic territory where Eros and Logos once again converge, contributing in unison to a dialectical eschatology.

Meditation VIII: The poet returns from both external and internal exile into a mythic and memory-rich poetic homeland. The Pacific land- and seascapes are momentarily menaced by a lit match the poet casts onto the parched terrain which “as sarças incendeia no caminho/que desce à beira de água,” an act which immediately sets ablaze the desiccated beach vegetation. “Em vão” the poet “tent[a] apagar as chamas que se ateiam/por de estalidos fogo/a propagar-se pela encosta acima.” The rapidly spreading

blaze poses a momentary danger for the onlooking poet. This is a discreetly metonymic disclosure of the poet's mission made by Sena to the reader, whose poetic (and therefore dialectical) meditation at the edge of the Pacific in fact counterbalances the routine destruction of being he witnesses reenacted daily by the sunbathers (ultimately understood to be symbols of a truncated humanity). More to the point, this self-disclosure of the poet's task is discreetly, almost lovingly destructive. The world observed at the edge of the Pacific is thus radically and irrevocably transformed by the poet's *incendiary* gaze, fire being the supreme metamorphic element, now destructive, now regenerative. Owing to its regenerative powers, this incendiary gaze, complexly antithetical to the world laid bare by his poetic consciousness, must logically be seen as an act of amorous destruction since it is the poet who assumes the mission of keeper of all metamorphoses, even that of a humanity which refuses, or has never known, or has not yet discovered, its own transformative powers of consciousness, its own metamorphic mission.

Sena's is an act of maternal^{xvii} or even amorous destruction; his poetry produces a violent state of grace and is consequently the verbal harbinger of regenerative possibility and revolutionary becoming. How else can we understand Sena's willingness to remain in a world of static being devoid of emancipatory negativity (i.e., the speculative freedom born of critical self-relation and mature selfhood)? The poet states in Meditation VI: "Ainda de vê-los me contentarei,/neste país aonde a vida esconde/de todos e se mesma até um gesto vago/em que de alguém a natureza espreite/como uma confissão de estar-se nu." Thus we have come full circle alongside the poet: exile, initially stemming from a deep sense of loss and isolation, has now become a form of potentially universal *Bildung*. *Bildung*, henceforth experienced by the poet in his Californian exile, has led both the poet and us, his readers, to an awareness of exile *as* a universal modality of human existence. The poet recognizes exile as the ontological ground for the universal process of *Bildung*. Ultimately, the reader of this meditative series comes to recognize, too, his or her essential task as one of poetic vision, amorous destruction, and dialectical synthesis, contributing essentially to the emancipatory project of the human species, which Kant defined as the highest freedom of our moral reason.

It is now the poet who will henceforth choose (or refuse) to descend and / or ascend the escarpment leading to the sea and the surrounding terrain. It is now the poet who is able to transcend the plague of solitude and emptiness observed in these eight meditations at the edge of the Pacific by way of the revelatory and emancipatory powers of poetic creation. From repressive nudity to the poetic disclosure of being, from the "portas cerradas" of Meditation VIII to the transfigurative powers of Eros, from the self-misrecognition of the sunbathers (who dwell in cities where the habits of alienated being are daily practiced) to the metamorphic powers of the poetic imagination, from personal exile to the essential knowledge acquired in exile, from the personal, autobiographical agon of the poet to the recognition of exile as universal experience (and therefore the source of self-transfiguring knowledge, as are also the manifestations

of *mythopoiesis* and Eros), from erotic stasis or stagnation to the poet's incendiary gaze, Sena has accomplished a complex meditation at the edge of the Pacific which is in fact the concretion of his theory-infused, universalist, eschatological poetics.

In addition to the regenerative destruction occurring in *Sobre esta praia*, the poetic imagination under the aegis of the element of water—Bachelard's «psychisme hydrant», as explored in his *L'eau et les rêves*—must also be taken into account in our approach to Sena's meditation at the edge of the Pacific. Bachelard's attempt to establish a “psychologie de « l'imagination matérielle » de l'eau” proves useful to our own understanding of this elemental agon between fire and water in Sena's poetic series:

[Nous reconnâtrons] dans l'eau, dans la substance de l'eau, *un type d'intimité*, intimité bien différente de celles que suggèrent les « profondeurs » du feu ou de la pierre. [Nous devons] reconnaître que l'imagination matérielle de l'est est un type particulier d'imagination. Fort de cette connaissance d'une profondeur dans un élément matériel, le lecteur comprendra enfin que l'eau est aussi un *type de destin*, non plus le vain destin des images fuyantes, le vain destin d'un rêve qui ne s'achève pas, mais un destin essentiel qui métamorphose sans cesse la substance de l'être”. (Bachelard 12)

Thus, the regenerative destruction effected by the poet's incendiary gaze combines with the metamorphic principle of water^{xviii} in Sena's poetic meditation. Unbeknownst to the sunbathers, they lie, sleep, undress, desire and play in the midst of an elemental and poetic tumult, now agonic, now ecstatic. What gives this poetic series its elegiac depth, is the sunbathers' alienation from the metamorphic drama unfolding within the poet and before the reader's eyes. Elegiac, chronologically and figuratively autumnal (the ambiguous period of the calendar occurring between the vernal and the hibernal, i.e., between the incendiary and the frigid^{xix}), the poetic series *Sobre esta praia*, *Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico* represents a major poetic achievement. In this work, Sena once again demonstrates his ability to preserve and simultaneously remap the experiential, psychological, historico-temporal, and speculative dimensions of the here-and-now, i.e., the unmediated contents of the pseudo-immediacy of the real he both witnesses and inhabits, subsequently placed by him within an ever-expanding framework of universal poetic cognition.

From the personal experience of exile, to knowledge *in* exile, to knowledge *as* exile—inasmuch as the agon is universal, as it is for Camões—Sena presents the reader with the task of an “esmagamento poético da alienação” because an emancipated humanity is not simply given us, certainly never once and for all. The poet, as keeper of metamorphoses, presents the ideality of an emancipated humanity in terms of process, a dialectical progression from self-ignorance, or imposed self-exile to, ultimately, a metamorphic fullness, from a state of alienation to a free, or at least *freer*, humanity. Although these meditations at the edge of the Pacific are complexly elegiac, autumnal, and often a death-mask worn by a profoundly alienated humanity, *Sobre esta praia*,

Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico represents an essential territory of poetry, and therefore is permeated by a spirit of fertile expectancy and ontological vehemence.

The poetry of Jorge de Sena, as exemplified in *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*, demonstrates the transition from theory to practice, from preexisting conceptual framework to poetic manifestation. This transition from theory (alienation, *Bildung*, dialectics) to practice is seamless. In fact, this transition appears seamless to the reader inasmuch as the poet himself sees theory and practice as equally integral to the poetic act itself. If there is a poetic path out of personal as well as ontological exile, then it is for poetry to illuminate humanity's potential for the self-transcendence of consciousness. The oppositional conceptual pairs, briefly examined below, adumbrate the event of negative awakening, or rather, an awakening of consciousness by way of the dialectical negativity or antithetical conceptualizations expressed by the poet throughout the meditations. In the seamless transition from theory to practice, Sena ultimately effectuates the poetic reconciliation of opposites, the synthesis of alienated humanity, a vision of erotic totality (evoked though still confined to the poet's mythopoetic imagination alone, not yet configured into a new, revolutionary collective reason uniting both Eros and Logos), and the disclosure of humankind's metamorphic essence as modern task and ever-renewed historical plight.

What Sena reveals to be at stake is the final determination of our ontological fate, whether it will be subjugated *being* or, instead, ongoing dialectical *becoming*.

I. b. An approach to *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico* in terms of oppositional conceptual pairs

- Atlantic/Pacific: Examples

Atlantic: "Atlântico" (Meditation I)

Pacific: "à beira do Pacífico" (subtitle of the meditative series) (Meditation I)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: The laconic geographical references in this oppositional pair, succinctly indicating the poet's displacement from one ocean to another, are submerged by the deeper thematic antiphony established between his own remembered erotic experience and the truncated eroticism he witnesses at the edge of the Pacific. This antiphony, which transcends the (mere) geographical distance between Portugal's European-side Atlantic coast and the Californian-American-side Pacific, is presented in an ebb and flow of now intensely revisited erotic experience, now exhausted or absent erotic fruition he witnesses in the present. This subtly stated erotic modulation is deftly suggested by the rhythmic break conveyed by the nineteenth- and twentieth lines of this meditation: "Aqui é um outro oceano./Um outro tempo," which interrupts the erotic fullness evoked from the poet's past in the previous lines. It is as if a sea-change has abruptly occurred (as if memory were structured tide-like between remembrance and loss), which the syncopated temporal and geographical logic of the first and second lines of the meditation already portends: "Sobre esta praia me inclino./Praias sei." With this opening line Sena not only

begins a complex meditation on the experience of exile and the nature of identity, but also subtly asserts, in the face of the erotic emptiness he witnesses before him, a poetic lineage with Camões' "Sobre os rios que vão/por Babilónia me achei," a poet, we recall, who, along with Sena and Pessoa, acutely explores the meaning of cultural identity radically transformed by the experience of inward and outward migrations of the self.

- Same/Not-Same: Examples

Same: "[eu] me deitei"; "me fitei"; "amei" (Meditation I)

Not-Same: "outro"; "Aqui é um outro oceano"; "Um outro tempo"; "é um outro oceano, um outro tempo em outro/diverso em gente organizado mundo"; "E nem mesmo de outrora e de outros mares" (Meditation I); "Um deles será dela mas também do outro?/Será cada um dos três dos outros dois?/Ambos os machos serão fêmeas do outro?"; "senão o de outrem, mesmo o de si mesmos" (Meditation II); "Como de outrora deuses pelas praias"; "Como de outrora deuses – mas não deuses" (Meditation VI)

The Centaur^{xx} (Meditation VI): a hybrid (man-horse) creature exemplifying simultaneously sameness and not-sameness.

Examples: "e as patas dos cavalos chapinavam/num mesmo brilho em que do sol fulgiam/claror e sombras nos divinos corpos/cujo cabelo voava como crinas, caudas,/dos animais flutuando entre o limite de águas/e o céu que de centauros se recorta" (Meditation VI); "e quando o centauro as quatro patas deixe /e se desmonte em duas mais terceira/erguida no ar como os cavalos erguem,/num sacudir de crinas, a cabeça/de olhos arregalados, boca espumejante,/e o corpo tombe horizontal no abraço/em que de humanas línguas e entrelaços/se façam deuses e que os homens sejam"; "centauros (sim e não) nessa unidade /entre nádegas nuas e mão duras/e o mecanismo a que transmitem quanto/não de vidas recebem e animais unidos"; "no que de amor os centauros se prometem" (Meditation VI). Sena has already adopted a liminal figure (the Cretan Minotaur in his poem "Em Creta, com o Minotauro," included in the volume *Peregrinatio ad loca infecta* (1969) to express, by way of the evocation of an animal-divine-human genealogy, the polysemous identity of the poet, i.e., his Protean-like imagination and metamorphic knowledge. Such knowledge transfigures exile, or banishment, or isolation, into fresh territories of mythopoetic homeland. The modulation of the experience of exile into *the* universal experience of humanity is determined by poetic consciousness and subverts (sublates) the political circumstances, or autobiographical elements of exile into a higher synthesis of post-exilic, i.e., non-alienated consciousness.

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: The poet develops this binary structure in order to produce a profound sense of ambiguity: "Ambíguos corpos,

sexos vacilantes,/Um cheiro de cadáver de tristeza e de um anseio/de matar ou ser morto sem prazer nem mágoa.” (Meditation I); “Se se voltara para o sol volvendo/aquela frente que de ambíguos corpos/separa os que têm seios e de pêlos/na inserção das pernas só triângulo,/daqueles que só liso o torso têm/pendente a tripla parte que os diz homens”; “Aqui apenas é/na solidão do mundo a solidão buscada/ para ter corpo inteiro sem que o saiba alguém,/nem mesmo ele saiba se é mulher, se é homem” (Meditation VII). This ambiguity expresses the unfinished or unextended humanity the poet observes, an ambiguity which reflects a state of erotic stasis and, concomitantly, alienated being. In this differently organized world [“diverso em gente organizado mundo”], the coastal terrain (itself ambiguous as threshold, or geographical limen between land and sea) Sena describes thus loses its geographical priority over other planes of expressive intentionality: the acutely observed, topographically described, repeatedly visited escarpment overlooking the Pacific coast is subsumed by the territory of poetry itself, i.e., the mythic and speculative liminality of full poetic consciousness.

- Life/Death: Examples

Life: (*Sobre esta praia* evokes a truncated Eros in a static world without metamorphosis, without the transcendence of alienated consciousness. It transmits therefore an image, not of life but, instead, of the absence of life.)

Death: “Um cheiro de cadáver que ao amor não feito”; “Se aqui nasceram deuses, nada resta deles/senão a luz mortal de corpos como máquinas/de um sexo que se odeia no prazer que tenha/e mais é de ódio ao ver-se desejado” (Meditation I); “Crepitam sarças mas os corpos não” (Meditation VIII)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: The aforementioned ambiguity produces a spectral world. The resolution of this pair is suggested in the final mediation, where the poet – bearer of fire – finally (definitively) abandons the escarpment from where he has observed the ambiguous human and natural world below.

- Summer/Winter: Examples

Summer: “em estios que hoje súbitos se acabam”; “estival”; “Visão estival” (Meditation IV); “Últimos dias estes são estivais” (Meditation V); “Um fósforo lançado ao chão do estio seco” (Meditation VIII)

Winter: “Sobre estas águas a que luz de inverno” (Meditation III); “a só de luz não serem como inverno” (Meditation V)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: The intercalation of vernal and hibernal references further underscores the erotic ambiguity of the sunbathers and a civilizational logic which impinges on them the banishment of a fully developed self.

- Unity/disunity: Examples:

“não de vidas recebem de animais unidos”; “mas já não existe essa unidade”
(Meditation VI)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: The world the poet observes at the edge of the Pacific is a fragmented world: unity, which is the embodiment of transcendent self-awareness and a historico-conceptual dynamism, is absent from this world of self-perpetuating stasis.

- Visible/Invisible: Examples

Visible: “estes que vejo” (Meditation II); “Ainda de vê-los me contentarei, /neste país aonde a vida esconde/de todos e si mesma até um gesto vago/em que de alguém a natureza espreite/como uma confissão de estar-se nu/em pensamento ao menos (de quem olha/ou de quem por olhado se aumentara/daquela carne que saliente ou funda/se aponta a quanto se abra, ou se abre ao que se aponta)” (Meditation V); “de ser-se um corpo visto que deseja sê-lo” (Meditation VI)

Invisible: “Aqui mesmo o olhar-se um qual pavor gelado/pinta de palidez o rosto que sorria,/o corpo que se adiante ao gesto desenhado”; “e mais é de ódio ao ver-se desejado” (Meditation I); “e como se Narciso os não tivera para/se contemplar lá onde as águas o chamassem/para afogar-se mesmo em olhos que o fitassem” (Meditation III); “Num outro tempo hão-de voltar o não,/se como enxames ou marinhas aves,/uma outra margem mais deserta encontrem/de humanidade que se não despindo/é como olhar que os veste das suadas roupas,/com que de humana a carne se envergonha/o quanto desejou não ser vergonha ali” (Meditation IV); “passear no espaço os corpos invisíveis” (Meditation V); “Longe/de todos e si mesmo. Um pobre corpo/esplêndido mas triste de o tão ser/que só distante aos ares se apresenta/como num espelho sem cristal a não/sequer o reflectir para lembrar-lhe/a própria imagem de que seja humano” (Meditation VII); “portas cerradas” (Meditation VIII)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: Nakedness is not simply the visual confirmation of the state of undress, or deliberately (or accidentally) exposed nudity to the voyeur or onlooker but, instead, a psychological disposition, the correlate of intimacy, one of the vivifying masks of Eros, i.e., the erotic disclosure of (potential) augmented being. Sena writes in his “Resposta a um inquérito sobre pornografia” that “O amor – Eros – existe, é na verdade e felizmente uma força terrível. Por isso tantos cobardes físicos e morais lhe têm um medo dos diabos. Porque inclui, ou pode ser só, o prazer sexual.”^{xxi} The naked sunbathers, then, bearers of a spectral eroticism, are paradoxically enshrouded by their nakedness.

- Dynamic /Static: Examples

Dynamic: (Where does the reader detect a dynamic element in this meditative series if not in the expressive and ideational poetic event itself named *Sobre esta praia?*)

Static: “como que exaustos antes de uma posse/que só abstracta se cumpriu na força/de duas rodas cintilando acasos/fortunas não cumpridas e em si mesmas/fechadas, prisioneiras, no volver velozes/por para que não houve que ao destino cravem/na terra coo em carne a suspensão do tempo”; “neste ficar de corpos e de máquinas,/cavalos não passeiam na memória/pastando com seus dentes e seus lábios/as ervas cujos dedos se levantam/mas nada tocam do que os não conhece” (Meditation VI); “Não há metamorfoses neste mundo/que mesmo ardendo ao sol se esconde no/mostrar-se inteiro qual por outros mundos apenas se entremostra o já desejo ansiado”; “nem mesmo ele saiba se é mulher, se é homem,/senão quando vestido for como lhe ordenam/que nas cidades vá como hábito de ser-se” (Meditation VII)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: The poet’s incendiary gaze is the dynamic center of this meditative series, far more powerful than the raucous motorized vehicles which disturb the “som tranquilo” of the sea. The incendiary gaze is also a silent destroyer (and therefore potential transformer) of the static world below.

- Flesh/Metal: Examples

Flesh: “corpos nus”; “os deitados corpos” (Meditation I); “em que corpos/jazem desnudos se queimando ao sol/na frigidez da aragem/que distraída pouosa como os sexos dormem” (Meditation VIII)

Metal: “dois corpos lado a lado como espadas frias” (Meditation I); “mas pares de rodas de estrondeantes máquinas”; “e o mecanismo a que transmitem quanto/não de vidas recebem de animais unidos/em pele contra pele, suor contra suor”; “(e não metal da máquina ruidosa”; “Os corpos de esbelteza, ei-los tão frios,/ao se alongarem solitários tais/que aos sexos um tremor lhes não acode/de quando no metal eram vibrados,/e o mar que se ouve agora não convoca”; “Neste ficar de corpos e de máquinas” (Meditation VI)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: Eros has been displaced onto the mechanical, the motorized, and the metallic. Eros has thus been literally disembodied, and the sunbathers’ concomitant pseudo-innocence (“que não têm na vida”: Meditation VIII) is trapped in the hellish landscape below, which the lit match thrown by the poet onto the “sarças” metonymically suggests.

- Descent/Ascent: Examples

Descent: “Ainda que desça a perpassar recantos/onde se acolherão mais corpos nus,/é um outro oceano...” (Meditation I); “Um fósforo lançado ao chão do estio

seco/as sarças incendeia no caminho/que desce à beira de água”; “Não descerei lá hoje, o incêndio queima/este descer incógnito e vazio à praia” (Meditation VIII)

Ascent: “Sobre esta praia me inclino” (Meditation I); “Lá em baixo”; “Em vão tento apagar as chamas que se ateiam/por de estalidos fogo/a propagar-se pela costa acima” (Meditation VIII)

Aspects of the poetic significance of this oppositional pair: The poet’s incendiary gaze spreads (“pela encosta acima”: Meditation VIII), recalling, for example, Petrarch’s ascent on Mont Ventoux, a seminal experience of transfigured creative consciousness, recorded in the well-known letter addressed to Petrarch’s confessor, Dionigi di Borgo San Sepolcro. The poet is thus reborn after his descent into the hell of erotic and civilizational stasis. He climbs, like Petrarch, to the summit of ascendant being. In Hegelian-Marxist terms, there occurs no dialectical progression from thesis and antithesis to the reconciliatory synthesis at this edge of the Pacific the poet observes. The dialectical progression occurs solely in the dialectical core of poetic consciousness itself.

I. c. Camões and Sena: a Dialectical Continuity of Poetic Consciousness

Camões: “Junto a um seco, fero e estéril monte” (strophes I, III, V, IX)

Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte,
inútil e despido, calvo, informe,
da natureza em tudo aborrecido;
onde nem ave voa, ou fera dorme,
nem rio claro corre, ou ferve fonte,
nem verde ramo faz doce ruído;
cujo nome, do vulgo introduzido,
é felix, por antífrase, infelice,
o qual a Natureza
situou junto à parte
onde um braço de mar alto se parte
Abássia, da arábica aspereza,
onde fundada já foi Berenice,
ficando à parte donde o sol que nele ferve se lhe esconde;
////////////////////////////////////
Aqui me achei gastando uns tristes dias,
tristes, forçados, maus e solitários,
trabalhosos, de dor e de ira cheios,
não tendo tão somente por contrários
a vida, o sol ardente e águas frias
os ares grossos, férvidos e feios,
mas os meus pensamentos que são meios
para enganar a própria natureza.
Também vi contra mi,
trazendo-me à memória
algã já passada e breve glória,
que eu já no mundo vi, quando vivi,
por me dobrar dos males a aspereza,
por me mostrar que havia
no mundo muitas horas de alegria.

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Não tinha parte donde se deitasse,
nem esperança algũa onde a cabeça
um pouco reclinasse por descanso.
Tudo dor lhe era e causa que padeça,
mas que pereça não, porque passasse
o que quis o Destino nunca manso,
Oh! Que este irado mar, gritando, amanso!
Estes ventos da voz importunados,
parece que se enfreiam!
Sòmente o Céu severo,
as Estrelas e o Fado sempre fero,
com meu perpétuo dano se recreiam,
mostrando-se potentes e indignados
contra um corpo terreno,
bicho da terra vil e tão pequeno.

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Assi vivo; e se alguém te perguntasse,
Canção, como não mouro,
podes-lhe responder que porque mouro. (Camões 238-241)

We encounter in these excerpts of Camões' *Canção* a prosodic density and meditative complexity close to that of Sena's meditative series of poems originating at the edge of the Pacific. Both poets set in motion in their respective poetic texts a multiple *referentiality*, thematic plurality, and dialectical intentionality which encompass several spheres of intellectual inquiry and introspective reflection, e.g., the topographical-descriptive, the rhetorical, the historico-temporal, the geographical, the autobiographical, and the ontological, categories of semantic organization of the real which we seek to explore briefly below.

a) The topographical-descriptive plane of expression whereby a fundamentally descriptive mode of language serves to communicate what the poets see in the immediate, empirical sensorium they observe and / or inhabit (terrain, seasonal characteristics, temperature, weather patterns, cloud cover, hour of the day, time of year, etc.). Such a description quickly melds with categories of a more complex level of apperception and cognition, producing a final effect which far surpasses the contents of the descriptive language considered separately or alone. In the case of the topographical-descriptive mode of language, both Camões and Sena place the poetic event within a signifying totality, a project of poetic cognition in which near and far, here and beyond, now and long ago, memory and emotive intentionality, being and becoming create a complex totality, both multi-layered and coherent. The topographical-descriptive plane of poetic expression, as evidenced in the examples provided below taken from Camões' *Canção*, and Sena's *Sobre esta praia*, represent therefore a fundamental principle of poetic composition in the two poets: the « degree zero » of poetic transfiguration. The mutable landscapes, weather conditions, seasonal flow, etc., which the poets separately express, echo the deeper emotional cadences, temporal modulations and conceptual progressions structuring the intentional universe of each poem. Thus, the topological-descriptive axis is never solely visual; instead, it

participates in the visionary scape which subsumes the empirical within a larger perceptual framework.

Camões: «Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte» Sena: *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*

<p>Examples:</p> <p>“Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte, inútil e despido, calvo, informe da natureza em tudo aborrecido”</p> <p>“nem rio corre, ou ferve fonte, Nem verde ramo faz doce ruído”</p> <p>“o qual a Natureza situou junto à parte onde um braço de mar alto se parte”</p> <p>“Aqui, no mar, que quer apressurado entrar pela garganta deste braço, me trouxe um tempo e teve minha fera ventura”</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <p><i>Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico</i> (subtítulo da série de oito poemas que leva o título de <i>Sobre esta praia</i>.)</p> <p>“Escurobscuro cendriplúmbeo e vento em de rajadas pálido céu-tempo o sol esconde e luz só de calor” (IV)</p> <p>“Ansiosamente que o sol nasça espero olhando as nuvens pelo céu tão claro que é ainda incerto o sol romper de entre elas” (V)</p> <p>Um fósforo lançado ao chão do estio seco as sarças incendeia no caminho que desce à beira de água. Em vão tento apagar as chamas que se ateiam por de estalidos fogo a propagar-se pela encosta acima” (VIII)</p> <p>“este descer incógnito” (VIII)</p>
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b) The rhetorical plane of expression whereby the poet incorporates, within the semantic territory of the poem itself, a manifest awareness of the linguistic nature of poetry, as well as the awareness of language as a social phenomenon endowed with a history exemplifying a varied interplay of cognition ranging from the general to the nuanced. Such awareness, displayed within the semantic horizon of the poem, suggests the acute understanding by both poets of the singularity of the poetic act in relation to the common sources of linguistic expression inasmuch as the poetic event is ultimately dependent on individual creative commitment; however, this event, to be effectively communicable, must constitute a fundamental commonality with the totality represented by the linguistic community of a historical people. We see in the realm of the rhetorical both the notion of the act of writing as persuasive strategy and as operating within the general scope of the linguistic sciences, i.e., we approach rhetoric here as both knowledge-bearing (logic, grammar, dialectics) and operating within the social agon. Language is never neutral nor is the poem separable from the plurality of cognitions which comprise its creation. It is by way of the tropological density of the poems that language *extends* its expressive medium to suggest levels of meaning beyond the habitual paths of signification as well as *questions* its own linguistic claim to realism, i.e., its ability to *express* the real. Rhetoric, here seen as an agonically *strategic science*, exemplifies the problematic nature of communication. Once one abandons—by choice or by force—home for exile, the perception of language (as strategy, science, or art) becomes a sign of difference, and the survivability of that difference becomes an urgent question. Rhetoric’s visibility—owing to its tropological self-reference—i.e., language in figurative relief, considered along with rhetoric’s embeddedness in language as

agonic self-reportage together configure the expressive surface of the poems. The rhetorical plane of expression suggests the poets' correlative condition as exiles (geographical, linguistic, political, social, etc.) and the task both assume: to transform the experience of exile into a poetic science of being, to unveil, by way of linguistic strategy and science, a renewed perception of cultural continuity both within and without a specific linguistic community, i.e., to envision the experience of exile as part of humanity's ontological essence and subsequently to transform this ontological essence into both understanding and refusal, self-awareness and a new speculative finality for the species. Both poets embody in their (rhetorically rich) poetry a demand for a civilizational project which envisions the transcendence of this exilic ontology. Humanity's agonic history unceasingly threatens to undermine its emancipatory project, reinterpreted and reasserted in modernity. The poets in question, even in their most absolute solitude, knowingly dwell, therefore, within an intensely lived language dwelt in turn by the historical humanity with which they share a commensurate project of ever renewed signification and intervention. Thus, the rhetorical plane of expression, poetically determined by the creative personality which presides over it, does not exclude the imaginative commitment to the creation of a common destiny; rhetoric is the strategic correlate of cultural transformation.

Camões: «Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte»

Sena: *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*

<p><i>Antiphrasis</i>: “cujo nome, do vulgo introduzido,/ é felix, por antífraise, infelice”</p> <p><i>Prosopopeia</i>: “... e se alguém te perguntasse Canção, como não mouro, Podes-lhe responder que porque mouro.” (The use of <i>prosopopeia</i> of the <i>Canção</i> intensifies the poem's self-referentiality: the poem as created aesthetic object participates in the renewal of the poet's own ongoing self-understanding.)</p> <p>(<i>Adnominatio</i> or <i>paronomasia</i>: “não mouro”/“mouro») “Assi vivo; e se alguém te perguntasse, Canção, como não mouro, podes-lhe responder que porque mouro”</p> <p>(This play on the meaning of words, whose phonetic and syntactic similarities reveal significant semantic difference, effects a profound temporal and semantic modulation. In addition, the dialectic of here and there, same and not-same, exile and ontological truth set in motion by the poem attains in this final strophe the culminating level of sublation (<i>Aufhebung</i>): language has been profoundly reshaped in the poem by way of the actuation of poetic self-awareness and has consequently introduced within the established lexicon present in the poem an internal dialectic which in turn alters the semantic distance between words. Reiteration is never repetition; the reiteration of the verb «mouro» discloses layers of semantic apperception which simple repetition cannot convey. In this case, the poet is able to depict by way of this reiteration the existential oppressiveness, the absence of, and the longing for, a transcendent or salvational plane of existence beyond the personal and universal experience of exile^{xxii}. This is the non-redemptive outcome of the poetic event. It is within this internal dialectic that the poet discloses the only transcendence possible:</p>	<p><i>Hyperbaton</i>: such disturbances of conventional word order, of habitual syntactical sequentiality of subject, verb, and predicate, convey yet another expression of dialectical progression. The syntactic surface of the poem suggests the dialectical vehemence of the underlying poetic dermis of the poem:</p> <p>“Escuroscuro cendriplúmbeo e vento em de rajadas pálido céu-tempo o sol esconde e luz só de calor esfria de suspensa na manhã rompente além do manto-sombra como espessa” (IV)</p> <p>“apenas uma ausência de azul duro que ardido ardente em torno à pele [humana a nua gente insectos voar fizesse ao longo desta margem serranias do mar lambidas em pequenas praias onde pousaram de entre rochas forma em por de areia o espaço procurado à solidão sem nome de se verem nus” (IV)</p> <p>“E é tarde já, no dia como no ano, até que voltem mais do que manhãs de sucessivas em contínua série bastante a despertar o gosto habituado em estios que hoje súbitos se acabam” (IV)</p> <p>“Ansiosamente que o sol nasça espero” (V)</p> <p>“Últimos dias estes são estivais e um frio se desliza no ar imóveis anunciando já os dias sucessivos a só de luz não serem como inverno” (V)</p>
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<p>the freedom of consciousness, not in spite of, but rather owing to, the radical contingency imposed on that freedom, a freedom made real by the poem itself. The poem thus functions as an ideality made concrete in the event of the poem; it exemplifies what Sena refers to, in his “Conceito de poesia,” as the “esmagamento poético da alienação.” The poet lives and dies in the selfsame event of poetic language, which is tantamount to affirming that life and death are encompassed, reappropriated, and transfigured by the poetic event itself.)</p> <p><i>Personification:</i></p> <p>“Aqui co elas [saudades] fico, perguntando aos ventos amorosos, que respiram da parte donde estais, por vós, Senhora, às aves que ali voam, se vos viram, que fazíeis, que estáveis praticando, onde, como, co quem, que dia e que hora.”</p> <p>“Diz-me o Tempo, que a tudo dará talho”</p> <p>(Personification of the “ventos amorosos, que respiram,” whereby the poet’s spatial and temporal condition of exile is overcome through a provisional re-mapping of distance within the erotic transcendence of desire.)</p> <p>(In addition to this specific case of personification, we recognize the personification of the poet’s internal dialogue, his stream of consciousness—which is the poem itself. Camões, the Mannerist poet critically and poetically revealed by Sena, transforms experience into provisional conceptual syntheses, and these conceptual syntheses into fresh experience: as in Sena, a deeply erotic and intellectual consciousness is at work here.)</p> <p>(<i>Spatial deictics:</i> «aqui» e «ali»)</p> <p>“Aqui, no mar que quer apressurado” “Aqui, nesta remota, áspera e dura” “Aqui me achei gastando uns tristes dias” “Aqui estive eu co estes pensamentos” “Aqui o imaginar se convertia” “Aqui, a alma cativa” “Aqui co elas [saudades] fico, perguntando” “Ali a vida cansada, que melhora”</p>	<p>“Mas não existe já essa unidade de ser-se em quatro patas duas pernas mais que de prometido salta sexo em movimentos fluidos e dormentes” (V)</p> <p>The <i>paronomasia</i> expressed by the antithetical (but also inwardly, dialectically proximate) pair: “não mouro” / “mouro”, present in the <i>Canção</i> by Camões, also elucidates aspects of the prosodic density of Sena’s poetic series. The reiteration of «mouro» in the <i>Canção</i> does not represent, we have seen, the mere repetition or negation of a semantic constant or intentional continuity. On the contrary, the final verse of Camões’ <i>Canção</i> can be understood as the final (though by no means conclusive) stage of a dialectical progression from the visual to the visionary, the empirical to the deeply self-reflective, the description of the poet in geographical, affective, erotic, and spiritual exile to the most agonic expression of humanity’s existential fate, i.e., to be condemned to wrest joy from the memory of its definitive loss, to attain understanding only by way of the illusions that human intelligence itself engenders, to become a genuinely cultural being solely by way of the self-immolation of the autobiographical in service to a universality which both saves and crushes the human being. The final verse of Camões’ <i>Canção</i> is the dialectical apex of this agonic portrait of the human situation: we die because we don’t die, i.e., we achieve a kind of terrestrial grace—of which the poem is the manifestation—by way of an anguished acceptance of a provisional redemption at the expense of any paradisiacal guarantee, both for the individual and the historical and/or civilizational mission of a nation such as Portugal. The nature of our human ontological specificity, once it is dialectically understood, simultaneously reveals and refuses a vision of human finality on earth. Thus, transcendence can only be achieved by virtue of our actions, our acceptance of existence as a spiritual and ethical task, beneath an oppressive sky (reminiscent of the early Gnostics’ understanding of <i>heimarmene</i>), i.e., the way we experience the oppressive nature of our contingent, non-eternal, illusory world by way of the transformation of contraries, intrinsic to humanity, into fresh, albeit provisional, syntheses of cognition and vision. The oppositional pair, “não mouro” / “mouro,” effects a profoundly agonic act of cognition. Its semantic and existential density recalls that of Sena’s “Nave de Alcobaça.” The following verses exemplify the dialectical valence shared by Sena and Camões:</p> <p>“Nave e cetro, e sepulchral resíduo, tempestade suspensa e transferida. Rosa e tempo. escada horizontal. Cilindro curvo. Exemplo e manifesto. Paz e forma do abstracto e do concreto” (Sena, <i>Poesia II</i>: 83).</p> <p>“Escada horizontal”? Yes. The dialectical sublation (<i>Aufhebung</i>) of contraries, the unexpected logical synthesis at the breaking point of logic itself which the paradoxical «escada horizontal» conveys, the subtle transposition of the Nave’s architectural design</p>
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	<p>(i.e., the Gothic quest of transcendence by way of gravity-laden stone) onto the verbal plane of the poem itself in order to express the transcendent power of erotic love, all these elements underpin the poetic metamorphosis of gravity into transcendence. Thus, too, the historical King <i>Pedro</i> I of Portugal and Inês de Castro become representatives of the universality of desire, i.e., the finite biographies of lovers culminate in this poem as the structural principle of universal human consciousness. Sena explores in this poem the confrontation (of a deeply existential nature) between visions of historical and erotic ideality and the ultimately insurmountable circumstantiality of human ontology. It is the poem itself which supports this dialectical structure of cognition and determines its ideational territory. The poem is, we have seen, the locus of a fundamental metamorphic process. As in the <i>Canção</i> by Camões, Sena's "Nave de Alcobaça" reflects the awareness that meaning is achieved not by a definitional fixity of language, but, instead, through the transformative power of language set in motion by dialectical understanding. Outside the poetic structure, such a complex progression of meaning does not occur: it is the poem itself which is both vehicle and consubstantiation of a deeply intellectual and erotic cognitive act which depends entirely on the expressive values of the text and their verbalized interplay. Thus, even the most prose-like passages of Sena's <i>Sobre esta praia</i> are in fact part of this transformative process. The playfully voyeuristic verses which follow:</p> <p>"Ela é de quem? De um deles só, dos dois? Um deles será dela mas também do outro? Será cada um dos três dos outros dois? Ambos os machos serão fêmeas do outro? Ou só um deles? Qual dos dois? O que sentado se recosta? O que deitado aceita contra o seu o corpo recostado?" (II)</p> <p>reflect the poetic commitment to Eros both as individual human experience and as speculative (and therefore civilizational) task.</p>
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c) The historical-temporal-recollective plane of expression whereby the poets express their agonistic relationship with the geographical and temporal circumstances of their exilic condition by way of a cultural and historical memory which both reflects humanity's civilizational impact on nature as well as the diasporic and diachronic contingencies intrinsic to historical consciousness: Camões' almost seventeen-year "exile" in Asia (1553-1570); Sena's almost nineteen-year American "exile" in Brazil and the USA, first Wisconsin, then California (1959-1978). Historical memory precedes and underlies the temporal experience of the poets' present as if the external civilizational history recorded in the poem provided the objective correlative for the diasporic elements of the human experience of time, i.e., the complex temporal cadences of being. The collective history of humanity and, specifically, Portugal's imperial history, would consequently function as the objective circumstance conditioning and informing the poets' insight into the eschatological orientation of time (historical, erotic, cultural, and poetic). The historical references made by Camões and

Sena in their respective poems represent the outward concretion of an inward civilizational logic, the material expression of a temporal arc the meaning of which the poem eventuates. Sena addresses these questions, for example, in his discourse, “Camões em 1972,” written for the quadricentennial commemoration of the publication of *Os Lusíadas*:

Ora, sucede que *Os Lusíadas* são muito mais do que um poema nacional, não apenas por ser a obra de um poeta de génio, com um domínio incomparável da sua língua, e de todos os recursos poéticos, e dotado de uma universal cultural. Na colossal e visionária ambição que preside à concepção de *Os Lusíadas*, tudo é pretexto, e pretexto de pretextos, para mais altos desígnios. (...) [A] própria história de Portugal é apresentada como messiânica, no poema; se através dele será possível, na visão poética de Camões, a realização suprema da reconquista do Paraíso perdido (simbolizado na Ilha dos Amores); se a viagem do Gama pode ser interpretada como um êxodo do Povo Eleito para fora da famosa e terrível «austera, apagada e vil tristeza», a caminho da Terra Prometida do Oriente – isso não sucederá porque está implícito inexoravelmente no destino histórico de Portugal, mas, muito pelo contrário, se e só quando a nação viver num plano superior de virtudes heróicas, propugnadas angustiadamente por Camões, e que façam que esse destino transcendente de unir o Ocidente e o Oriente, e de levar para a Índia o Messias, não seja traído por baixas ambições e cobiça, por intolerâncias e injustiças, por falsas vaidades e mesquinhas presunções (Sena, *Trinta anos de Camões*: 270).

Camões: «Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte» Sena: *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*

<p>“onde um braço de mar alto reparte Abássia, da arábica aspereza, onde fundada já foi Berenice”</p> <p>“Arómata, outro tempo, que, volvendo os céus, a ruda língua mal composta, dos próprios outro nome lhe tem dado.”</p> <p>“nele aparece o Cabo com que a costa Africana, que vem do Austro correndo, limite faz, Arómata chamado. Arómata outro tempo, que, volvendo os céus, a ruda língua mal composta, dos próprios outro nome lhe tem dado”</p> <p>“Também vi contra mi, trazendo-me à memória algũa já passada e breve glória”</p> <p>“Diz-me o Tempo, que a tudo dará talho; mas o Desejo ardente, que detença nunca sofreu, sem tento me abre as chagas de novo ao sofrimento”</p>	<p>“Mas aqui não. Aqui apenas é na solidão do mundo a solidão buscada para ter corpo inteiro sem que o saiba alguém, nem mesmo ele saiba se é mulher, se é homem, senão quando vestido for como lhe ordenam que nas cidades vá como hábito de ser-se” (VII)</p> <p>(The modernity of Sena’s poetry is apparent in his sociological approach to the historical development of present-day Western, late-capitalistic societies. Sena’s avowed identification with Hegelian-Marxist eschatology thus approaches history in terms of an ongoing process of societal transformation. The modern mythic imagination is future-orientated: history is experienced as an open-ended task. However, nothing guarantees the fulfillment of the eschatological vision and dialectical progression of humankind. Sena is keenly aware of the alienating dimension of modernity: the humanity he witnesses “sobre esta praia,”—walking and/or supine, isolated and/or sportive, quiescent and/or in flight from censorious eyes—is enslaved by the cities where “o hábito de ser-se” reflects what has replaced erotic plenitude for them: the repetitive habit of being without visionary becoming, the loss of more mature levels of consciousness which the truncated eroticism they exhibit even when—especially when—they lie nude on the beach, conveys.)</p>
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	“na terra como em carne a suspensão do [tempo, apenas por instantes (mais não seja), de ser-se um corpo visto que deseja sê-lo no que de amor centauros se prometem” (VI)
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d) The geographical plane of expression whereby the deictics “aqui” e “ali,” for example, referred to above as part of the rhetorical plane of expression in the poems, henceforth belong to a vaster plane of spatial mediation, i.e., the expression of both external (historically named by imperial powers) and internal (existential) deixis. Consequently, such use of geographical reference (encompassing the earlier discussed deictics in the poems) belongs to the fundamental dialectical logic at work in their poetry, which seeks to remap the ratio of distance and proximity within the larger agon of habitual being and dialectical becoming.

Camões: «Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte» Sena: *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*

<p>“onde um braço de mar alto reparte Abássia, da arábica aspereza, onde fundada já foi Berenice, ficando à parte donde o sol que nele ferve se lhe esconde”</p> <p>“nele aparece o Cabo com que a costa Africana, que vem do austro correndo, limite faz, Arómata chamado.”</p>	<p>“Do Atlântico ondas rebentavam plácidas E o delas ruído às vezes tempestade que em negras sombras recurvava as águas” (I)</p> <p>“Ainda que desça a perpassar recantos onde se acolherão mais corpos nus, é um outro oceano, um outro tempo em outro diverso em gente organizado mundo” (I)</p> <p>“neste país aonde a vida esconde de todos e si mesmo até um gesto vago” (V)</p> <p>“Como de outrora deuses pelas praias (ou na Camargue de hoje aldeões marinhos) desnudos cavalgam rente às ondas na húmida areia e vasta pela baixa-mar deixada a descoberto com seus molhos de algas” (VI)</p>
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e) The autobiographical plane of expression whereby the poets represent themselves as the subjective pivot by which personal agon and dialectical progression converge into a single theoretical-practical expression of visionary urgency.

Camões: «Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte» Sena: *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*

<p>“Aqui, nesta remota, áspera e dura parte do mundo, quis que a vida breve também de si deixasse um breve espaço, porque ficasse a vida pelo mundo em pedaços repartido”</p> <p>“Também vi contra mi, trazendo-me à memória algua já passada e breve glória, que eu já no mundo vi, quando vivi, por me dobrar dos males a aspereza”</p> <p>“revolvendo na mente pressurosa os tempos já passados de meus doces erros,</p>	<p>“Praias sei: Me deitei nelas, fitei nelas, amei nelas com os olhos pelo menos os deitados corpos” (I)</p> <p>“Quem se pergunta como eu me pergunto confessa claramente que distância existe entre o passado e este presente assim deitado ao sol à beira de água como estes três se deitam ou recostam sem que sequer com as mãos os sexos toquem, senão o de outrem, mesmo o de si mesmos” (II)</p>
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de meus suaves males e furores, por ela padecidos e buscados”	
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f) The ontological plane of expression whereby the poets transform the personal experience of exile into a science of self. On this plane of expression, the poems express the human condition *as* exile, not an individual’s personal experience *in* exile. The poem discloses the radical conditionality of the self. The poets’ autobiographical elements recorded in their respective texts contribute to an understanding of humankind’s ontological situation, i.e., its radical contingency. Both poets produce texts which address such questions as: How does one grow in homelessness?; How does one transcend the universal experience of exile (whose origin lies in the external and internal forces at work in humanity’s alienated history)?; How must poetry safeguard (as potential *Aufhebung*) this portrait of an agonistic species in light of an ever renewed speculative ideality^{xxiii}? Thus, proximity and distance, same and not-same, previously symptomatic of personal exile, geographical position, rhetorical self-awareness, and topological description here become invested with the final level of signification. Language has been reshaped once again in and by the poetry. The map of being has become the object of an intense remapping of personal and speculative poetic cognition. An earlier habit of being has opened up to the horizon of becoming. The profound emptiness caused by existential happenstance, erotic loss, banishment from home, political shortsightedness, historical decline, or even a destructive civilizational logic become the “escada horizontal” of envisioned (i.e., imagined) fulfillment.

Camões: «Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte» Sena: *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*

<p>“mas os meus pensamentos, que são meios para enganar a própria natureza”</p> <p>“Aqui, a alma cativa” (wherein the deictic «Aqui» is here more a sign of a universal human condition than a mere geographical tag)</p> <p>“mostrando-se potentes e indignados contra um corpo terreno bicho da terra vil e tão pequeno”</p>	<p>“Ambíguos corpos, sexos vacilantes, Um cheiro de cadáver que ao amor não feito concentra de tristeza e de uma anseio de matar ou ser morto sem prazer nem mágoa” (I)</p> <p>“Como de outrora deuses pelas praias” (VI)</p> <p>“Como de outrora deuses – mas não deuses” (VI)</p> <p>“Mas não existe já essa unidade de ser-se em quatro patas duas pernas mais que de prometido salta sexo em movimentos fluidos e dormentes, e que duro viria sangue e carne (e não metal da máquina ruidosa) a penetrar a carne entreaberta e quando o centauro as quatro patas deixe e se desmonte em duas mais terceira erguida no ar como os cavalos erguem, num sacudir de crinas, a cabeça de olhos arregalados, boca espumante e o corpo tombe horizontal no abraço em que de humanas línguas e entrelaços se façam deuses de que os homens sejam” (VI)</p> <p>“nada seria no deserto a imagem Da livre humanidade que é só carne E encontro eventual de dois desejos” (VII)</p>
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	<p>“Não há metamorfoses neste mundo” (VII)</p> <p>“nem mesmo ele saiba se é mulher, se é homem” (VII)</p> <p>“estes descer incógnito e vazio à praia aligidamente ardente a que formas de corpos vieram procurar só uma inocência que não têm na vida” (VIII)</p>
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II. On the Utility of Exile For the World to Come. Conclusion

In an important letter addressed to Sophia Mello Breyner, dated 9 January 1968, Sena writes, from Madison, Wisconsin (site of his first North-American exile), concerning the proposed publication of an anthology of Brazilian poetry to which would be appended a selection of Portuguese poetry, a publication which awoke in the poet both his critical acumen and acute self-awareness concerning the ever unsettled vagaries of exile and identity: “eu disse-lhe que para mim, a poesia era substantiva antes de ser nacionalmente qualquer coisa, e que, em todo o caso, sendo eu um poeta português, mas cidadão brasileiro naturalizado (que sou – e provavelmente dentro de dois anos e meio serei norte-americano, porque mudarei de nacionalidade quantas vezes possa, para que conste...), ele tinha de pôr-me no intervalo (Sena / Breyner 99). The poet’s reference to the “intervalo,” i.e., the interstitial, recalls the work of Homi K. Bhabha and his exploration of the imaginative territories that a post-colonial reading of self and culture inspires. The dialectics of identity and exile represents a rich conceptual and creative field of inquiry in a contemporary world of pilgrims remapping their sense of home and fate which

may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-national histories of the ‘people’. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.” (Bhabha 56)

We see that Sena’s creative and critical project would respond to this line of inquiry with his characteristic visionary genius for intellectual synthesis and existential depth. On the way from experiential exile to an identity encompassing this essential cultural “hybridity,” doesn’t Sena’s poetics offer us the consummate modern (and now postmodern) map for our becoming bearers of a truly metamorphic citizenship wherein even death is nothing but a local summit?

ⁱ Sena refers to Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), a Marxist-inspired philosopher, student of Husserl and Heidegger, as well as a major theorist of the Frankfurt School (Institute for Social Research [*Institut Für Sozialforschung*]), alongside philosophers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Marcuse taught philosophy at the University of California, San Diego toward the end of his life. Sena, in his essay, “Sobre a cultura norte-americana” (published in *O Tempo e o Modo*, n.ºs 64-66, Outubro-Dezembro, 1968, pp. 826-846), discusses the relationship between university funding, the awarding of full professorships and intellectual autonomy in the United States. He specifically refers to the case of Marcuse, associated with the founders of the American New Left philosophically aligned with the Marxist and Hegelian intellectual tradition. The aforementioned essay has recently been published in a collection of highly perceptive sociological writings by Sena concerning the country of his second New World exile: *América, América*, ed. Mécia de Sena and Jorge Fazenda Lourenço, introd. Jorge Fazenda Lourenço, Lisboa: Guimarães-Babel, 2011, 44.

ⁱⁱ *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico* has been translated into Italian (*Su questa spiaggia*, Port./Italiano, org. e trad. Carlo Vittorio Cattaneo and Ruggero Jacobbi, pref. Jorge de Sena, intro. Luciana Stegagno Picchio, Roma: Fogli de Portucale, 1984) and into English: *Over This Shore... Eight Meditations on the Coast of the Pacific*, Port./English, trad. Jonathan Griffin, Santa Barbara, CA: Mudborn Press, 1979. Given that the purpose of the present essay is to foment discussion about, and fresh critical insight into, the poet’s legacy amongst a presumably bilingual readership (Port./English) as well students of comparative literature, we have opted throughout to refer solely to the Portuguese original of the text, without recourse to translation of the meditations. Jonathan Griffin’s English-language translations of Meditations II and VI of *Sobre esta praia* are also included in the following

volume: *The Poetry of Jorge de Sena, A Bilingual Selection*. Ed. Frederick G. Williams. Foreword Mécia de Sena. Santa Barbara, CA: Mudborn Press, 1980, 280-287).

ⁱⁱⁱ Sena's critical study of Camões is immense: *Uma Canção de Camões: Interpretação Estrutural de uma Tripla Canção Camoniana, precedida de um Estudo Geral sobre a Canção Petrarquista Peninsular, e sobre a Canções e as Odes de Camões, envolvendo a Questão das Apócrifas* (1966), 2nd edition (1984); *Os Sonetos de Camões e o Soneto Quinhentista Peninsular; As Questões de Autoria, nas Edições da Obra Lírica até às de Álvares da Cunha e de Faria e Sousa, revistas à luz de um Inquérito Estrutural à Forma Externa e da Evolução do Soneto Quinhentista Ibérico, com Apêndices sobre as Redondilhas em 1595-1598, e sobre as Emendas Introduzidas pela Edição de 1598* (1969), 2nd edition, 1981; *A Estrutura de 'Os Lusíadas' e Outros Estudos Camonianos e de Poesia Peninsular do Século XVI* (1970), 2nd edition, 1980; *Trinta Anos de Camões, 1948-1978 (Estudos Camonianos e Correlatos)*, 2 vols. (1980); *Estudo sobre o Vocabulário de Os Lusíadas. Com notas sobre o humanismo e o exoterismo de Camões*, 1982.

^{iv} Sena practices the three paths of poetic creation, critical vision, and investigative scholarship with seemingly inexhaustible brilliance. In his story, "Super Flumina Babylonis," published in *Antigas e Novas Andanças do Diabo*, Sena achieves the summit of combined creative and critical intelligence. The narrative recounts moments of the quotidian existence of the poet, now living his final days in Lisbon, after the long years of penury and hardship spent in Asia. Frequently interrupted, misunderstood by family and friends, exhausted and infirm, the poet, nonetheless, is on the verge, in Sena's narrative, of creating the *tercetos* of his "Sobre os rios que vão/por Babilónia me achei ...," Camões' deeply anguished, spiritually agonic poetic appropriation of Psalm 136. Sena studies this work in the essay "Babel e Sião" (in: Jorge de Sena, *Trinta anos de Camões, 1948-1978, Estudos camonianos e correlatos*, vol. 1, 113-131). Sena's aforementioned narrative explores the existential and poetic maelstrom of one who knows that "a poesia é falsa e verdadeira. Como ela diz não dizendo, e é não dizendo que diz. Como da nossa alma não sabemos nada antes de escrevê-la, e como não é dela que sabemos depois de ter escrito. A perdição procura-se, como um homem se despe para banhar-se no mar, a modos que Leandro atravessando o Helesponto. E o amor somente bastaria, como o momento em que tudo se esquece, tudo desaparece, tudo se evapora, ao calor que abrasa e que só dura um instante mas um instante em que o tempo se suspende, se petrifica num espaço e numa forma, e todo o verdadeiro espaço foge velozmente, correndo pelos tempos fora até que é ele o tempo que se suspendeu." (Vol. 1, Lisboa: Edições 70, 1989, 164) The poetic meditations, *Sobre esta praia*, whose genesis is Sena's recurrent witnessing of the natural and human worlds visible at the edge of the Pacific, describes a world of supine or otherwise spectral men and women who, tellingly, do not swim in the radiant ocean before them, in contradistinction to "Leandro" before the Hellespont. Thus they run no risks, and by so doing, they refuse the mediatory power of the sea as a symbol of poetic self-transcendence.

^v Of the forty-four poems comprising *Arte de Música* (1968), Sena includes five dedicated to compositions by Mozart (no other composer's work is as poetically represented as Mozart in this volume). Concerning one of the five Mozartian-inspired poems, "Mozart: Andante do Trio K 496," Sena states (in his notes to the volume in question) to have written it while listening to a performance of the Trio at the Centre Culturel Portuguais of the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. The opening strophe of this poem: "Esta frase emerge súbita no trio saltitado,/o violino pergunta de repente numa angústia ansiosamente pergunta (o que é resposta/agónica, prévia – "(*Poesia II* 184), reveals Sena's profound understanding of the musical composition's agonic structure, informed by the interrogative thirst, the insuperable anguish, and the existential harshness underlying the event of aesthetic creation. Such recognition of the fundamental incompleteness of joy experienced by humanity—expressed by the reference to the questions which resolve themselves, not into a-problematical answers, but rather into ever deeper questions of being and fate—is germane both to Mozart and Sena.

^{vi} In: Jorge de Sena, *Poesia e Cultura*, intro. Mécia de Sena, Porto: Caixotim, 2005, 79.

^{vii} Sena writes with respect to the *Canções* of Camões (Sena refutes in the following quote the established critical edifice concerning the sixteenth-century poet, specifically as expressed by a member of an earlier generation of Camões scholars, namely Joaquim de Carvalho: "Mas, se os conceitos não são ideias, e se portanto não tendem para uma realidade arquetipicamente platónica [as argued by Carvalho], isto significa que, especulativamente, a dialéctica camoniana se afasta da dialéctica de Platão, e que o dualismo de Camões, ultrapassando a simples dialéctica do ser e do não-ser, se aproxima de uma concepção moderna, que, numa época crucial, Camões genialmente intuiu. (...) [E] se os conceitos, não sendo ideias, são emanções da própria dialéctica vital em que Deus se cumpre e humaniza, a dialéctica camoniana não só é originalíssima, como não é vivência mística, mas identificação da

consciência individual com a compreensão da ordem cósmica.” In: Jorge de Sena, *Uma Canção de Camões: Interpretação Estrutural de uma Tripla Canção Camoniana, precedida de um Estudo Geral sobre a Canção Petrarquista Peninsular, e sobre a Canções e as Odes de Camões, envolvendo a Questão das Apócrifas*, Lisboa: Edições 70, 1984, 264.

^{viii} Luís de Camões, *Rimas*, ed. Álvaro J. da Costa Pimpão, Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1953, 240.

^{ix} Jorge de Sena, *Poesia II*, Lisboa: Edições 70, 1988, 79.

^x Luís de Camões, *Rimas*, ed. Álvaro J. da Costa Pimpão, Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1953, 239.

^{xi} In: Jorge de Sena, *Poesia e cultura*, introd. Mécia de Sena, Porto: Caixotim, 2005, 81.

^{xii} Sena writes in his preface to the first edition of *Poesia I*: “Eu não acredito na imortalidade de coisa alguma; e, embora um poema deva valer por si próprio, como obra independente do autor e da sequência da criação a que este se foi dando, eu todavia penso que é mais importante, humanamente, o espírito de peregrinar que o facto conclusivo de haver visitado lugares santos. Na peregrinação que é a nossa vida, muito mais somos visitados do que visitamos. Diário íntimo ou fastos espiritualmente autobiográficos – a poesia é menos e é mais do que isso. A co-responsabilidade do tempo e nossa, que é a única garantia de uma autenticidade – pois que será esta senão a busca de uma verdade que está para lá da actividade estética, não tem por fim achar, mas testemunhar que insatisfatoriamente ela é buscada? –, ultrapassa precisamente o solipsismo inerente mesmo à mais convivente das criações poéticas, e concede à poesia uma paradoxal *objectividade* que as fabricações da perfeição artística são incapazes de atingir” (27).

^{xiii} The image of the “peregrinatio,” which is explicitly evoked by Sena in his volume *Peregrinatio ad loca infecta, 70 poemas, alguns dos quais amáveis, com um epílogo altamente filosófico, e sem prefácio do autor* (1969) conveys a particularly Senian conceptualization concerning the fundamental condition and ultimate fate of humanity. In the poem “Glosa de Guido Cavalcanti,” which forms part of this volume, Sena writes: “(...) morrerei/no exílio sempre, mas fiel ao mundo,/já que de outro nenhum morro exilado.” We are, according to the poet, beings in exile, bearers of states of consciousness on a complex pilgrimage toward (mediated) alienation, creators of meaning which is both intensely immanent and dialectically incomplete. (In: Jorge de Sena, *Poesia-III*, Lisboa: Moraes Editores, 1978, 52.)

^{xiv} Herbert Marcuse develops a theory of the “performance principle,” a dimension of civilization’s establishment of the reality principle (which entails the delay of satisfaction, work, and the curtailment of pleasure) to the detriment of the “pleasure principle” (play, immediate gratification, no repression): “Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions. While they work, they do not fulfill their own needs and faculties but work in alienation. Work has now become general, and so have the restrictions places upon the libido. Labor time, which is the largest part of the individual’s life time, is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification for socially useful performances in which the individual works for himself only in so far as he works for the apparatus, engaged in activities that mostly do not coincide with his own faculties and desires” (*Eros and Civilization* 41).

^{xv} Marcuse writes with respect to the fungibility of beings in the reified culture of present-day techno-scientific rationality: “Only in the medium of technology, man and nature become fungible objects of organization. The universal effectiveness and productivity of the apparatus under which they are subsumed veil the particular interests that organize the apparatus. In other words, technology has become the great vehicle of *reification*—reification in its most mature and effective form. The social position of the individual and his relation to others appear not only to be determined by objective qualities and laws, but these qualities and laws seem to lose their mysterious and uncontrollable character, they appear as calculable manifestations of (scientific) rationality. The world tends to become the stuff of total administration, which absorbs even the administrators. The web of domination has become the web of Reason itself, and this society is fatally entangled in it. And the transcending modes of thought seem to transcend Reason itself.” (*One-Dimensional Man* 172-173)

^{xvi} Our choice of the word “administered” is deliberate here. Marcuse, in his *Eros and Civilization*, specifically in the chapter entitled “The Dialectic of Civilization,” discusses the history of culture as the history of repression (a conceptual cornerstone of Freudian’s metapsychological thought), in the light of the modern societal productive apparatus: “With the rationalization of the productive apparatus, with the multiplication of functions, all domination assumes the form of administration. (...) Control is normally administered by offices in which the controlled are the employers and the employed. (...) Responsibility for the organization of [...] life lies with the whole, the ‘system,’ the sum total of the institutions that determine, satisfy, and control [...] needs.” (89) Sena’s sunbathers, who daily toil in the

very cities which define and impose on the city dwellers an alienated self-understanding, reflect, in the complex meditative mosaic of *Sobre esta praia*, a kindred sense of rationalized domination: “The ideology of today lies in that production and consumption reproduce and justify domination. But their ideological character does not change the fact that their benefits are real. The repressiveness of the whole lies to a high degree in its efficiency: it enhances the scope of material culture, facilitates the procurement of the necessities of life, makes comfort and luxury cheaper, draws ever-larger areas into the orbit of industry—while at the same time sustaining toil and destruction. The individual pays by sacrificing his time, his consciousness, his dreams; civilization pays by sacrificing its own promises of liberty, justice and peace for all.” (91) Sena’s poetic meditation can be seen, then, as a complex exploration of the fate of potentially emancipatory Eros in the face of an increasingly successful, administered (i.e., dominated, controlled, alienated) humanity. The volume, *Sobre esta praia*, is a profound critique of a specific project of rationality, a specific civilizational process which has left the sunbathers in a state of psychological stasis: “neste ficar de corpos e de máquinas” (Meditation VI).

^{xvii} Sena refers to this maternal aspect in a passage to the first edition of his *Poesia I* (1960), where he distinguishes himself, as poet, from the poetic universe of Fernando Pessoa, although, as critic, Sena has proved to be one of the most penetrating— and one of the earliest—readers of the modernist’s work (see *Fernando Pessoa & Cª Heterónima*, first published posthumously in 1982, containing all of Sena’s writings on Pessoa, the earliest of which dates from 1940): “Porque só artificialmente, embora no plano da poesia e não no das artes distractivas, nos é possível assumir extrinsecamente, exteriormente, a multiplicidade vária que, dentro de nós, é uma família incómoda, uma sociedade inquieta, um mundo angustiado. Há muito de orgulho desmedido nesse «fingimento», que contrasta, quanto a mim, com a humildade expectante, a atenção discreta, a disponibilidade vigilante, com que, dando de nós mais que nós mesmos, testemunhamos do mundo que nos cerca, como do mundo que, vivendo-o, nós próprios cercamos do nosso maternal cuidado” (25).

^{xviii} In his lecture, “Conceito de poesia,” given at the *Ateneu Comercial do Porto* in 1951, Sena concludes this seminal text for the understanding of the poet’s theoretical underpinnings steeped in nineteenth- and twentieth-century sociological and philosophical thought, in particular within the Marxist-Hegelian tradition, and specifically, in this text, with respect to the concept of alienation (its presence and fate within modern poetry) with an image of the swimmer who battles the alienating structures which condition: 1) the sociological aspects of a human being’s awareness of existence as a co-determination of choices (which he must make within the general social and institutional context of his time and place), and 2) the historical framework of his self-understanding as a finite being essentially alienated from the experience of existential totality, who makes of this perceived loss of totality the initial source of his quest for freedom (“Em face dos limites, em face da consciência de alienação, em face da sabedoria de que a *vida nem pela própria vida poder ser trocada* (...) o mundo dos seus sentimentos, das suas emoções, das pequenas coisas em que a sua vida se perde, das pequeninas coisas – tão grandes, tão elas mesmas e tão indefiníveis – que a morte leva consigo – e ironicamente, sobre a experiência da sua vida limitada, proclama a suprema certeza de que existe, de que vive, de que luta, a gloriosa afirmação de que ‘era ainda razão ser a razão vencida’ que é o mote máximo, dado por Camões, da aventura da consciência humana” [*Poesia e cultura* 83]). Finally, having crushed the alienation which conditions the self by virtue of his practice of poetry as the expression of ontological ideality, Sena exemplifies the dialectical structure of his thought: the poet is one who, after practicing “o esmagamento poético do real” (83), wrests from historical and temporal circumstance an ironic self-transcendence of all limitation. Freedom occurs by virtue of heroically accepting our fate as both starting- and endpoint. How else can we understand Sena’s statement that we must have “a coragem de [...] alienar” the partial satisfaction of a moment, a desire, a dream? Only by such sacrifice does the poet exemplify the definitive capture of time which simultaneously defeats him: “E depois fazer dessa alienação a vitória permanente sobre quanto pretenda substitui-se à fuga, à perda, à morte, à prodigiosa correnteza de vida em que, a cada momento, corremos o risco de afogar-nos. Ir no rio da vida como o nadador que às águas se entrega mas por seus próprios meios flutua e nada, eis um símbolo: símbolo da dignidade humana, feita de abandono, segurança, confiança, mortal saber de só nadarmos até ao limite das próprias forças, mas sempre o rio transportará nem que seja o nosso próprio cadáver até ao fim do mundo” (*Poesia e cultura* 84). Interestingly, in *Sobre esta praia, Oito meditações à beira do Pacífico*, there are many sunbathers and even riders of motorized beach vehicles, but there are no swimmers, suggesting the absence of the dialectically self-transcendent. The eight meditations comprising this volume reveal, we have seen, a world of unmitigated alienation. The absence of

dialectical consciousness or historical self-understanding, in conjunction with the alienating aspects of the productive apparatus of the “cidades” where they work, means that the sunbathers have no access to the emancipatory project of cognition which Sena attributes to the poet’s mission. No *Bildung* is possible in this state of intractable self-exile they erringly call home.

^{xix} The refusal by the poet to descend to the beach below him, impeded as it is by the burning “sarças,” which we witness in Meditation VIII, is the occasion for Sena to employ a language reminiscent of Dante’s own descent into the Inferno of his *Commedia*, as well as the language of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*: “Não descerei lá hoje, o incêndio queima/este descer incógnito e vazio à praia/algidamente ardente.” The poet expresses by way of such oxymorons the agonistic nature of being within the general erotic economy of (unfulfilled) desire.

^{xx} “A falsa Hera, passando a chamar-se Néfele [nuvem, em grego] depois do sucedido, deu a Íxion [filho de Flégias, rei dos Lápitias] um filho, o objecto e desprezado Centauro que ao atingir idade adulta gerou, ao que se diz, das éguas da magnésia, os Centauros, seres meio-cavalo, meio-homem, dos quais o mais venerável era o douto Quíron. (In: Robert Graves, *Os mitos gregos*, trans. Fernanda Branco, 3ª edition, Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2005, 213.)

^{xxi} In: Jorge de Sena, *Dialécticas teóricas da literatura*, Lisboa: Edições 70, 1977, 281-282.

^{xxii} Sena, the profound critical reader of Camões, not only sheds new light on the lyric and epic poet, his encyclopedic knowledge of the critical fate of Camões since the earliest editions of his work, his groundbreaking methodological approach to Camões’ work, *critically and poetically invented* Camões for new generations of scholars and readers, not in the sense of distorted fabulation, but rather in the deepest etymological sense of the word as *arduously executed discovery*. Sena (re)discovered Camões despite the long-standing critical, biographical, and interpretive fallacies concerning the poet’s lyric and epic works. Sena’s reinvention, i.e. discovery of Camões as a Mannerist poet, duly (exhaustively and definitively) contextualized historically, aesthetically, and conceptually, is pertinent to our approach to the *Canção*, «Junto de um seco, fero e estéril monte» and, specifically, in relation to the poet’s theologico-metaphysical framework: “É que, oficialmente, o maneirismo não podia ser reconhecido. Não o foi efectivamente em parte alguma; (...) Reconhecer como válida a despedaçada visão do mundo em dialécticas contraditórias, nas quais os conceitos (base da estabilidade social) importavam menos do que a mútua anulação deles noutras dialécticas sucessivas (base de uma concepção existencial comprometida apenas consigo mesma) era reconhecer que o orgulho mundano do Renascimento não passava de um fogo fátuo, de uma aparência (...); “O que temos na poesia de Camões (...) [é] o facto de a arte e o pensamento para esses homens [Camões, Montaigne, Donne, Miguel Ângelo, Shakespeare, Cervantes] serem um comprometimento individual, exigirem um saber de salvação, como diria Max Scheler. (...) Mas essa liberdade transferida para o indivíduo teria de esperar quatro séculos pelo existencialismo, para que fosse cómodo alguém deitar-se nela” (*Trinta anos de Camões*, vol. I, p. 73, 76-77). In another passage of the essay “Camões e os maneiristas,” Sena writes with respect to the specificity of the Mannerist world-view: “O ponto de vista é que é radicalmente outro: uma exigência individualista (...). No vácuo aberto entre o medievalismo que vem morrer no Renascimento, e a idade moderna, que nascerá, oculta, nas vascas curvilinearmente geométricas do Barroco, o maneirismo é uma angustiada liberdade” (*Trinta anos de Camões* 53). The poetic kinship between Camões and Sena is unmistakably present in this reference to a state of “angustiada liberdade.”

^{xxiii} Jorge de Sena writes in his preface to the first edition of *Poesia I*: “Não direi que a poesia é um diário íntimo, ou o registo dos factos significativos de uma autobiografia espiritual. Mas tenho para mim – *opositor declarado de todas as formas de idealismo (e não idealidade)* – que ao tempo só escapamos com alguma dignidade, na medida em que sem subserviência o tornamos co-responsável dos nossos escritos” (27). (our emphasis)